Monasteries of Bodh Gaya

Abodes of Cultural Amalgamation of South Asia

—**Dr. Kaynat Kazi**

BANGLADESH BUDDHIST MONASTERY

Introduction

Bodh Gaya is one of the most significant Buddhist pilgrimage site situated in Bihar, an eastern state in India. The place is a testimony to one of the most important phases in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is believed that he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at this place around 2600 years ago. The entire place is reminiscence of the historical and cultural footprints of the wisdom that Gautam Buddha attained in his lifetime.

This book, *Monasteries of Bodh Gaya-Abodes of Cultural Amalgamation of South Asia*, is a cultural record of the 41 different temples/ monasteries that are situated in Bodh Gaya. With the vivid description of these monasteries, the author Dr Kaynat Kazi has not only tried to capture the history but also the spiritual soul of these buildings. Kaynat is the first solo female travel blogger and an avid photographer. Her love for travel and photography has taken her to many seen and unseen places in India and abroad that has resulted in completing her journey of over Three Lakh kilometres in a short span of five years. As a conservationist of culture, she is striving to preserve the cultural heritage for future generations just like the archaeologists and conservationists that have preceded us. This book, though designed and conceptualised by a photographer provides an insight into the inner peace and mental peace through the vivid photographs. Kaynat's attempt to present Bodh Gaya in a new light and as depicted in this book, has never been done before. This book will establish Bodh Gaya as a must visit place.

Coffee Table Book

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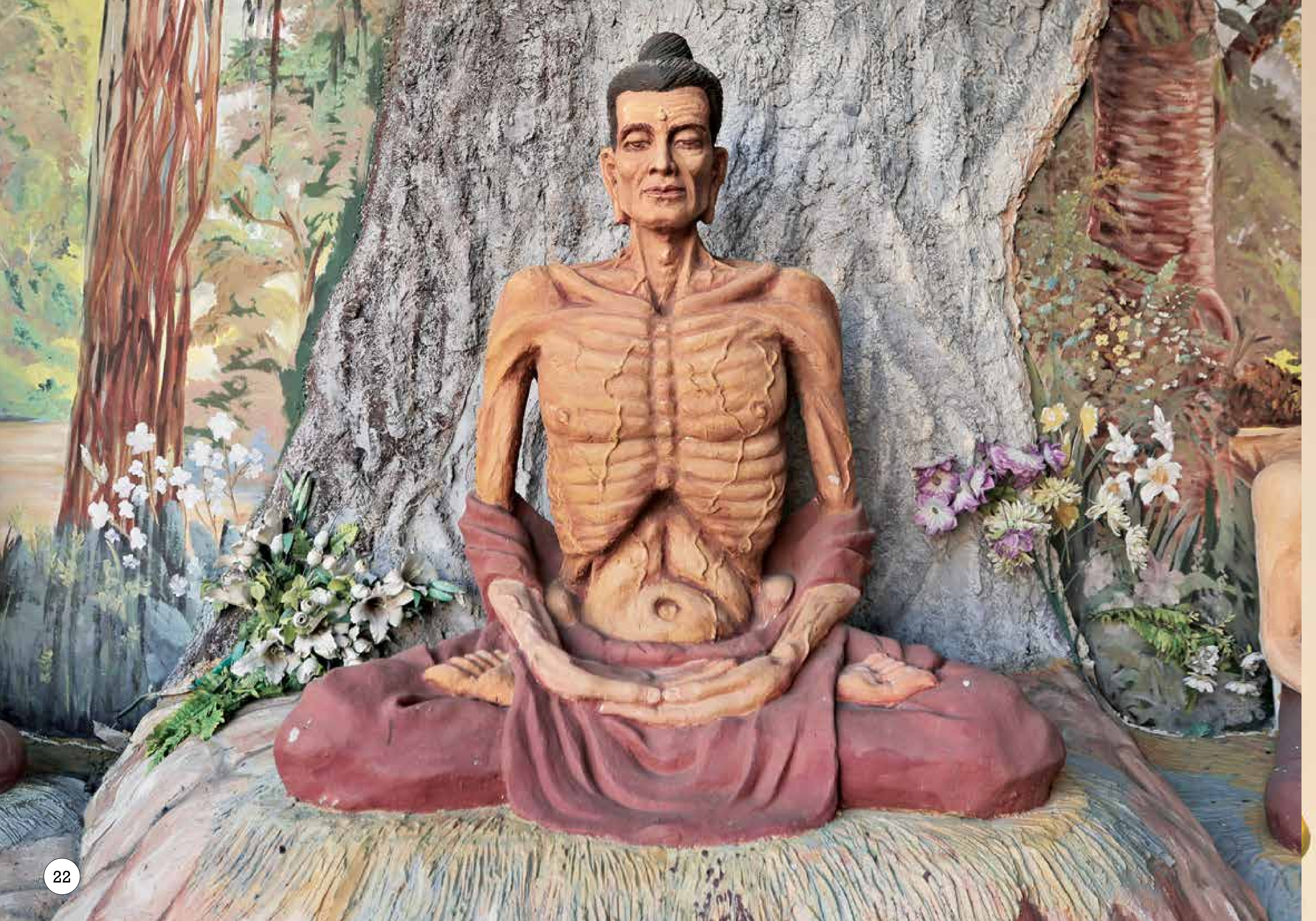
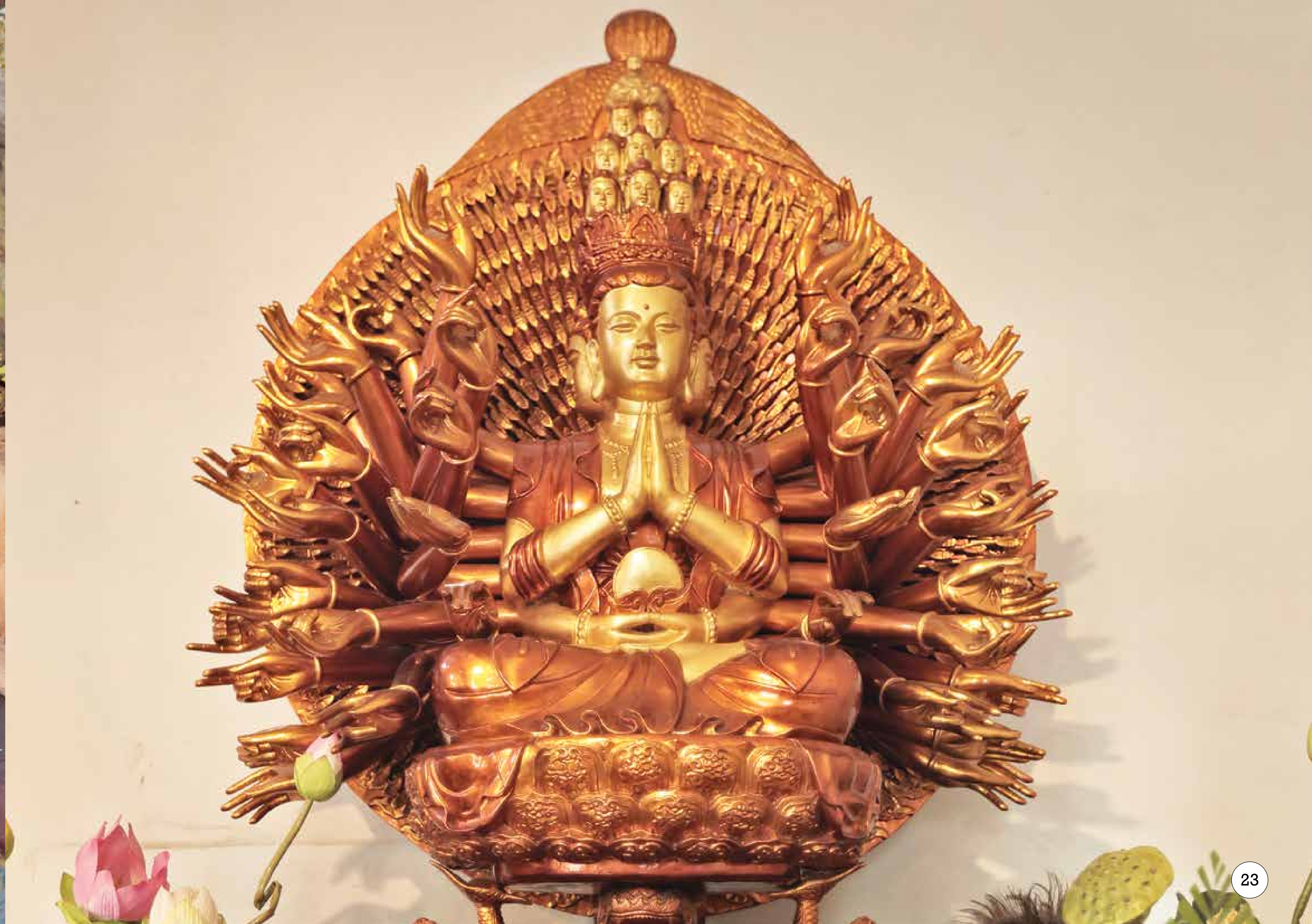
Buddha and his Diverse Representations

The beauty of Bodh Gaya is such that one can experience diverse representations of the Buddha. In the various monasteries constructed by the different Asian countries that embraced Buddhism, the images or sculptures of Buddha mirror the characteristics or features of the people of these countries. The craftsmanship and artistic flavours of these countries are well characterized in these statues. The art forms of the monasteries highlight the distinctive styles of the particular country which is also visible in a decoration or the sculpture itself. Every minute detail in these monasteries bears the cultural identity of that country.





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Overview

In the year 2023, I had the opportunity to tour Bodh Gaya, which is a small town in the district of Gaya when I was visiting the Magadh University of Bihar for an academic lecture. Surrounded by hills, this place has an important identity on the world map, especially as a Buddhist pilgrimage site. Around 600 BCE, Prince Siddharth of the Shakya clan attained enlightenment under the Mahabodhi tree which is situated in the Gaya district. Gaya is a small hilly district adorned by thick forest of Uruvela. The serenity and peace of this place attracted Prince Siddhartha. Even after thousands of kalpas, the tranquillity of this place is intact.

I have travelled throughout India in the last 10 years, and during this decade-long journey, I got the opportunity to visit many monasteries and monuments related to Buddhism. I have traversed through beautiful monasteries spanning from Ladakh to Sikkim that are situated in the entire Himalayas at different altitudes. I found immense peace in all the monasteries. If we talk about Himachal or Ladakh, then it takes at least two to four hours to travel from one monastery to another, but Bodh Gaya is the only place where more than 41 Buddhist monasteries exist within a radius of just three kilometers. Bodh Gaya is not an ordinary place but has the distinction of housing different Buddhist monasteries that are amazing and unique in themselves.

In Bodh Gaya, I had the feeling that this place was different from all others that I had visited earlier.

I determined to document Bodh Gaya and started researching about the place. I wanted to experience the rich cultural heritage of the place myself instead of referring only literary texts and started my journey of visiting the Buddhist monasteries. As I started exploring the monasteries, I got hold of a lot of new information. It seemed as if every Buddhist monastery had some amazing and lesser-known fact. I felt that there was something still unexplored just like a secret treasure. All the four directions of the place held some mystical fortune. I was surprised that till now no one had seen this amazing place from this perspective. This holy place was frequented by great travellers, eminent historians and archaeologists, great kings and their emissaries, yet I was seeing something different here. I am not a Buddhist, nor did Mahatma Buddha have any special influence on me, still, this place mesmerized me.

The beauty, architecture and ornamentation of the monasteries attracted me. The wonderful amalgamation of Buddhist and vivid South Asian arts at one place is not found anywhere else in the world. These are unique because these Monasteries have been built by those countries in South Asia which are followers of Buddhism. Bodh Gaya has also been the place where Buddhism was founded around 2600 years ago and then spread all over Asia.

Bodh Gaya is an ancient suburb and has seen peaceful as well as tumultuous times. This town is a witness to that great event, when the prince of Shakya clan attained enlightenment and became Buddha. The Mahabodhi tree situated here is believed to be the one where Buddha meditated. Bodh Gaya is the most important place in the life of Lord Buddha.

In the present times, people from all over the world visit Bodh Gaya which is a heritage site. The followers of Buddhism especially come here to pray and seek the wisdom of the Buddha. The energy that this place exhibits, makes one wonder how this important philosophy lost its popularity. However with the collaborated efforts of the followers of Buddhism and archaeologists, the lost glory of this place has been revived.

To ensure that Bodh Gaya's magnificent past continues, different countries have built Buddhist monasteries here. Arrangements have been made in these monasteries for the Buddhist monks to live, study and meditate. As the monasteries were established in India, the various Buddhist scholars from different countries, also brought their culture along with their faith. Today, each monastery situated here serves as the guardian of its culture and represents a miniature version of the country. Each monastery, is a miniature version of the culture of the country it represents. All the monasteries depict the same message that Mahatma Buddha preached to the world, but are very different from each other. There is a unity in diversity in all the Buddhist monasteries.

The reverent one i.e. Buddha is the common thread that binds all these monasteries, while their cultural diversity makes them unique. These Buddhist monasteries around the Mahabodhi Temple complex appear like a beautiful bouquet of vivid lotus flowers, each flower representing the different countries.

The centre of Bodh Gaya is the Mahabodhi Temple complex, where the Mahabodhi tree is located, under which Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment. The Mahabodhi Temple complex has been declared a world heritage by UNESCO. The historical aspect of this monument is very interesting. The restoration work of this temple complex was carried out under the direction of Sir Cunningham.

While going through this coffee table book, you will see many beautiful, amazing and attractive Buddhist monasteries of Bodh Gaya. My sole aim of this book is to make people aware of the cultural diversity through beautiful pictures, so that our countrymen can understand the importance of this important heritage of their country.

In the end, I would like to thank all those people who have played an important role in editing this work. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Vinay Bhardwaj of Magadh University, who connected me with Bodh Gaya. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to the country's renowned archaeologist Mr. K.K. Muhammad for agreeing and supporting the idea of cultural documentation of a unique place like Bodh Gaya. I will always be indebted to Mrs. Sudha Murty, founder and patron of Murty Trust, for understanding how important it is to create an authentic document for the coming generations. Without her blessings, this noble work would not have been completed.

I am also grateful to my entire team in this project, Sachin Mishra, Faiz Ahmed, Vinay Kamboj, Dr. Digvijay Singh Rathore and Shalvi Dutta. Their support and advice have always been valuable to me.

With best wishes,
Dr. Kaynat Kazi

PALYUL NAMDROLING

Foreword

This coffee table book is dedicated to the 41 magnificent temples located in Bodh Gaya India. Gaya is an ancient and historically important place of worship, as well as was an important centre of the Magadha dynasty. It is a holy place for Hindus, also known as Pitra Gaya and equally revered place for the Buddhists called as Bodh Gaya. Since ancient times, devotees from all over the world have visited this place to worship the Buddhist temple and the Bodhi tree. The place has many other monuments in and around Bodh Gaya that are not very popular amongst the tourists. These monuments belonging to many eras/ dynasties of India have distinct architectural styles.

This collection showcases the beautiful architectural and profound spiritual heritage of these temples. I'm delighted to be a part of this journey, hoping to enlighten readers about India's rich cultural legacy and diversity. Each page is a testament to the timeless beauty and historical significance of these sacred sites. May this book inspire a deeper appreciation for India's unparalleled heritage.

Sudha Murty
Trustee – Murty Trust

MURTY TRUST

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all those people who built the beautiful Buddhist monasteries at Bodh Gaya and restored the ancient glory of the place. This book also pays tribute to all the painters, embroiderers, weavers, sculptors and architects who are constantly contributing to make Bodh Gaya splendid.

History of Bodh Gaya

Bodh Gaya is located 12 kilometres south of Gaya district in the state of Bihar and is part of the Gaya district. It is considered the most sacred place for Buddhists all over the world. This place has always fascinated explorers, travellers, archaeologists, architects, founders, sculptors, painters, artists and litterateurs as well as pilgrims. With its rich art and cultural history, it would not be an exaggeration to call it an art pilgrimage.

Bodh Gaya is so closely linked to the life of Buddha that one cannot delve into its history without knowing the life and times of Buddha. In order to understand the historical and cultural history of this place, it becomes imperative to also know about Shakyamuni Buddha's life and the period that he spent here.

Uruvela was the largest forest of the kingdom of Magadha. Prince Siddhartha came here at the age of 29. There are five important stages in the life of Prince Siddhartha: ***birth, realization, enlightenment, first sermon and death or mahapariniravana***.

Prince Siddhartha was born in Kapilavastu, now in Nepal to King Shuddhodhan and Mahamaya of the Shakya clan. He was married to a girl named Yashodhara and had a son Rahul. Being a prince, he became a member of the Shakya sangha. There was a dispute between the Shakyas and the Kolis of Devdah over the sharing of water of river Rohini. The prince intervened and advised not to fight as he was a peace lover. However, his suggestion infuriated the commander of the armed forces. The Prince was accused of defying the rules of the Shakya sangha, which was a powerful clan during those times. The council provided three options to the prince - first, participation in the war as a soldier, second, hanging or exile and third, social boycott of the whole family.

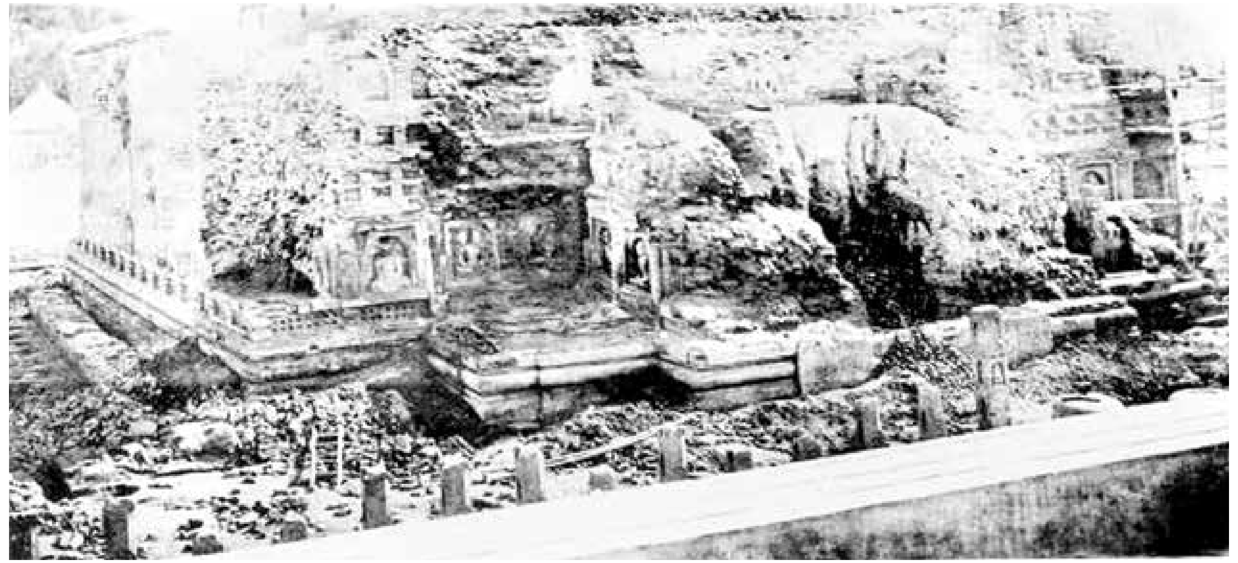
Siddhartha decided to renounce home and left the palace after taking permission from his wife and parents. He gave up his royal life and decided to seek the eternal truth at the age of 29. Wandering in the forest, he reached the area of Bimbisara, which was covered with dense forests and home to beautiful caves. He would go to the city once and bring alms and then meditate. His aura was worth seeing. When the King of Bimbisara got to know about him, he visited him. The king, seeing Siddhartha, the prince of the Shakya clan as an ascetic, requested him to return for performing his royal duties. When, Siddhartha refused, Bimbisara even offered to give him half of his own kingdom and said that he could spend the rest of his life there. Siddhartha did not accept this proposal and said, "O King, I have left all these temptations and set out in search of truth and bliss, I cannot return now."

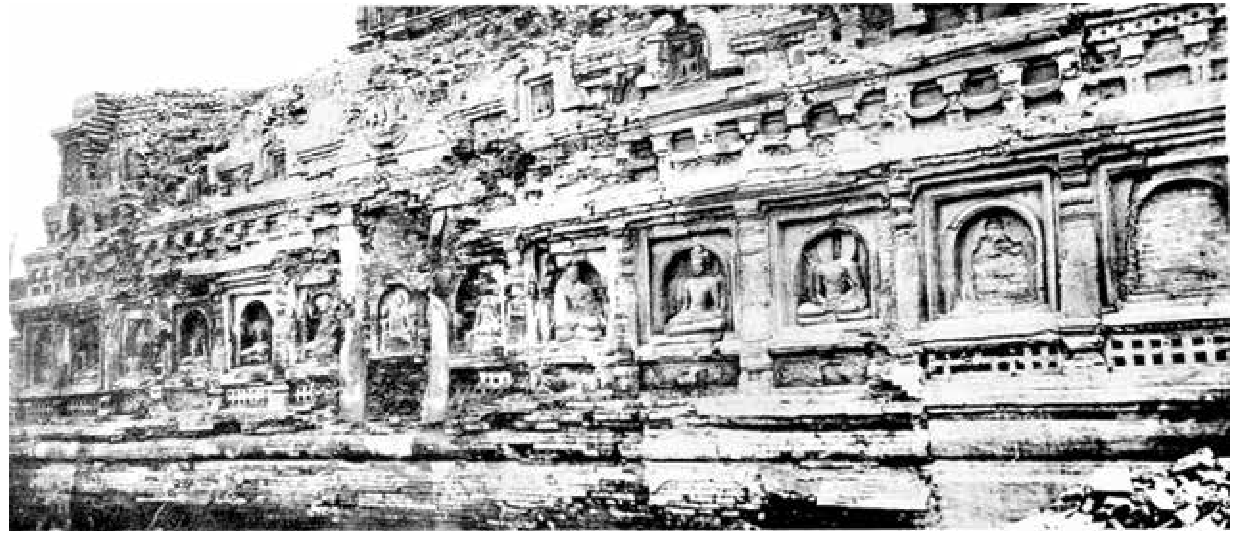
Spiritual quest and the search of a mentor, led Siddharth to the doorsteps of the sage Bhrigu. He was surprised to see Bhrigu's daily routine of enduring immense hardships. After spending some time with

sage Bhrigu, Siddhartha decided to study the Sankhya philosophy and left for the city of Vaishali. As he was studying the philosophy, most of his questions remained unanswered and he did not find inner peace. He then decided to meditate alone and was joined by five more ascetics i.e. *Kaundinya, Ashwajit, Vaap, Mahanaam and Bhadrik*.

Vaishali was a much sought after place and frequented by people from all over the world in search of truth and enlightenment. Therefore, Siddhartha and his companions left for the forest of Uruvela located in the state of Magadha to find a more peaceful place. This forest was known as the place for severe austerities. Siddhartha and his five companions also started on the journey of extreme self-restraint for seeking the supreme truth.

In the beginning Siddhartha, consumed fruits and tubes, which gradually reduced to consumption of only leaves. He increased the severity of his ascetic practice. After following this routine for six years, his body became so weak that he did not have the strength to even stand by himself.





It is believed that during that time, Buddha had a series of dreams. In one of the dreams, he saw three women playing an instrument called Veena. The strings of the first woman's Veena were very tight that resulted in a shrill sound. The strings of the second woman's Veena were very loose due to which no music could be produced while the strings of the third woman's Veena were aptly tuned hence, a sweet music was being played from it. This dream made Siddhartha realise that subjecting one's body to extremities will not result in enlightenment. The body needs proper nourishment and diet to survive as the attainment of knowledge requires a healthy body and mind. This changed his outlook completely and the idea of the middle path emerged. When Siddhartha told this idea to his companions, they were infuriated and left Siddharth to go back to Vaishali. After his five companions left him, Siddhartha decided to travel alone in his spiritual quest. While wandering, he reached Senanigrama on the banks of river Niranjana near Bodh Gaya.

A young woman named Sujata happened to be passing by and noticing how thin he was, ran quickly home and brought him a milk pudding. Strengthened by the nutritious meal, Siddhartha bathed in the Niranjana River, crossed it, and arrived at the spot where the Mahabodhi temple stands today. He spent seven weeks at this place and completed his transformation from a royal prince to the enlightened one. Thus, Bodh Gaya is considered an important place in the life of Mahatma Buddha.

Bodh Gaya and the places around it, i.e. the Uruvela forest, Senanigrama, the Mahabodhi Temple complex and the Mahabodhi tree are testimony to the most important events of Buddha's life. Many stories related to life and times of Buddha are very popular here.

There are three aspects to understand the significance of Bodh Gaya - first religious perspective, second historical & archaeological perspective and third is the creative perspective.

From the religious point of view, many folktales are prevalent, which include miraculous events and are interesting to hear. The historical and archaeological aspect is a chronology of the settlement, destruction and restoration of this place, that are evident in the form of inscriptions, statues found during excavation and texts of travellers who visited this place. The creative aspect is based on the experience of an individual visiting this place.

The monasteries of Bodh Gaya have contributed immensely in making this place an international destination. There was a time when the splendour of the place where Buddhism originated fell into oblivion, however South Asian countries worked hard to restore the lost glory. The Mahabodhi Temple complex as it appears today is mostly the result of the renovations carried out in the late 19th century. It was initiated by a Burmese mission and then continued by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Mauryan emperor Ashoka is considered to be one of the first rulers to establish the foundation of the temple complex after Mahatma Buddha attained enlightenment. According to Sir Cunningham, the present temple stands on the remains of the temple built by Emperor Ashoka. Ashoka had built a 50 feet high stupa here, similar to the Sanchi stupa. The present Mahabodhi Mahavihara is considered to be of the second century as established by the gold coins and other objects discovered during excavation here.

During the Gupta era, King Megha Varma of Sri Lanka had also constructed a Sangharama with three tall towers here, which has also been corroborated by the travelogues of famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang. The Chinese traveller Fa-Hien who visited India in 409 AD had also written about these three Monasteries. Hieun Tsang or Xuanzang, the Chinese traveller, who came here in about 637 AD, has also mentioned about

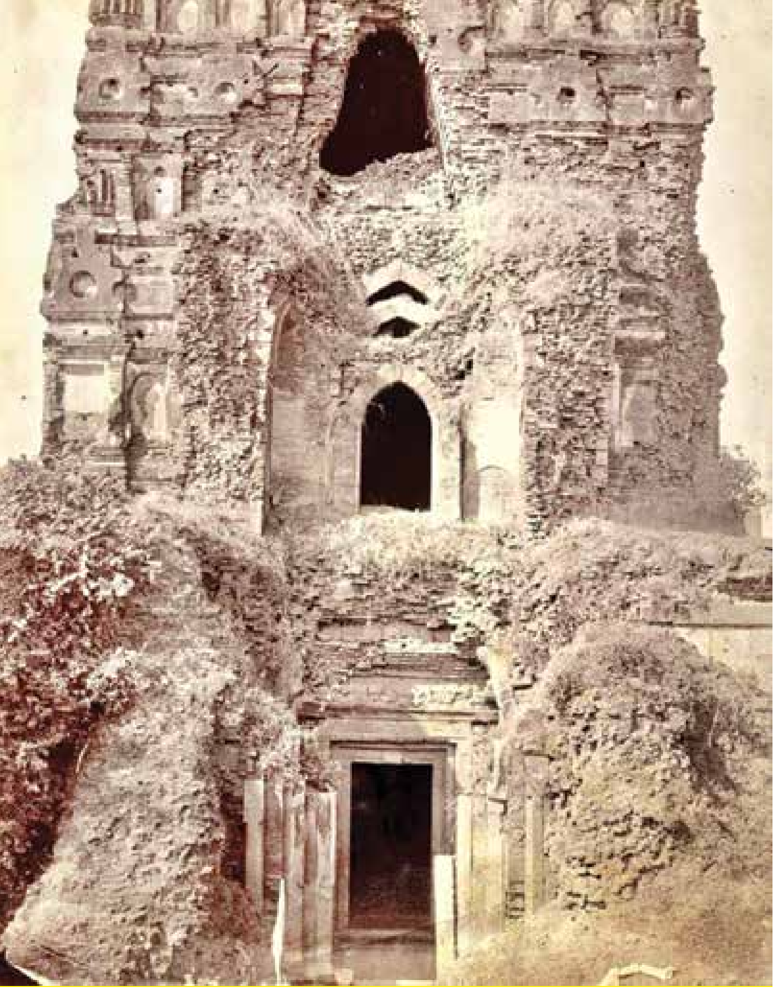
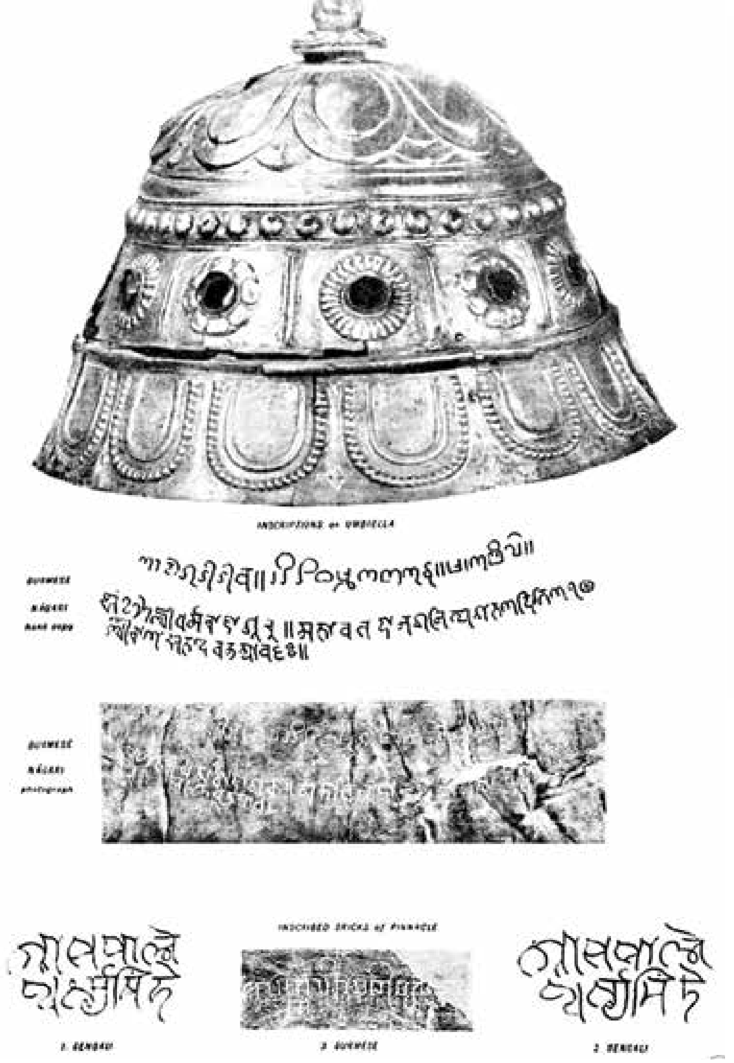


Photo: Hieun Tsang and Xuan Chang



the presence of one thousand Buddhist monks here.

Sri Lanka and Bodh Gaya share a strong historical and cultural bond, which started with Sanghamitra, daughter of emperor Ashoka, who planted a branch of the Mahabodhi tree from Bodh Gaya in Sri Lanka in 288 BCE. This bond grew stronger with many such exchanges that took place from time to time. In the fifth century, Shramana Prakhyatakirti of the royal family of Sri Lanka worshipped here. A century later, Mahanama, a Sri Lankan monk presented a statue of the Buddha and also built a small cottage in about 588 AD.

The magnificence of the place shone further during the reign of the Pala dynasty. Large scale renovation work was carried out under the instructions of the King Mahipal in 1010 AD. The statues that are seen today are considered to be commissioned during that time.

Gradually Bodh Gaya lost its patrons and the decline started. Bakhtiyar Khalji attacked Nalanda University and Bodh Gaya, which was at a distance of 80 kilometers from it, also came under the attack. A Tibetan pilgrim, Dharmaswami, while visiting India in the 1234 AD found the place abandoned. Due to the terror of the Turks, the main door of the temple was covered with stones and mud further adding to the abandonment. The monks of the Buddhist monastery also went hiding into the forest. King Buddhasen of Magadha was eager to support the monks and the Buddhist order and waited for the tide to turn and a favourable situation to emerge.

Ashok Challa who was a powerful King, also showed keen interest in the upkeep of the Mahabodhi temple. Many inscriptions found during excavations have provided documentary evidences of his patronage. Later, Jayasen, son of King Buddhasen, donated a village and ensured the maintenance and worship of Vajrasana and handed over its responsibility to the Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka.

In the thirteenth century, the Burmese monks were involved in the maintenance of Mahabodhi temple. The inscriptions found here in Burmese script confirm this fact. In the last phase of the thirteenth century, there is information about the complete repair of this temple by the king of Burma. After this, the place saw very bad times due to the invasions of Muslims in North India.

The time progressed and Europeans started visiting India for trade and other matters. Scholars like Buchanan Hamilton visited Bodh Gaya in the year 1811 and found the Buddhist monastery in a very dilapidated state. In 1861, Sir Alexander Cunningham also found it in a similar state.

In the year 1880, dissatisfied by the quality of the maintenance work being done by the king of Burma, the government appointed J.D. Beglar to carry out the restoration. Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra and Sir Alexander Cunningham, who is considered the father of the Archaeological Survey of India, played a significant role in the revival of this temple. The present temple complex that is seen is the result of their hard work. The excavation of the temple started in 1877 and continued for three years. Two lakh rupees were spent on the restoration work during those times.

As the restoration completed and word spread, the international community was also drawn to Bodh Gaya. The Archaeological Survey of India renovated and landscaped most of the Mahabodhi Temple complex in the 1880s. This also marked the beginning of a new phase of conservation, construction and controversy over the site.

Many statues found in Bodh Gaya, including those that are worshipped till today, are believed to be from the time of the Pala dynasty. They are dated approximately to be between 8th -12th century AD. These statues depict both Buddhist and non-Buddhist deities due to which a controversy arose. The dispute was regarding ownership of the site by Hindus, the possibility of which is very strong, because many Hindu statues are still worshipped in the temple complex.

Gaya is located just 15 kilometers from Bodh Gaya, which is an important pilgrimage for the Hindus. People come here to perform the last rites of their kith and kin. On the other hand, as the international Buddhist followers started taking special interest in Bodh Gaya, the demand to establish boarding and lodging facilities increased. Therefore, during the 20th century, international Buddhist communities and associations began to establish temples and monasteries in the place.

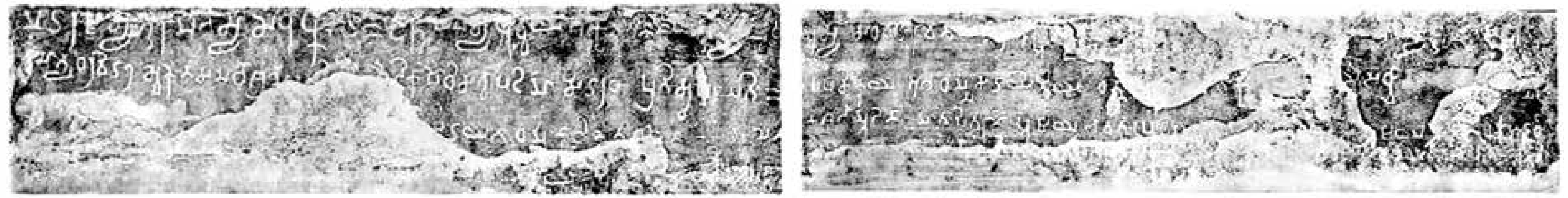
Consequently, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the growing presence of Buddhists in Bodh Gaya and the sudden increase in daily activities at the Mahabodhi Temple strained relations and the ownership and authority of the Mahabodhi Temple became a matter of dispute. Initially, Sri Lankan-born Buddhist revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala founded the Mahabodhi Society in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1891 to 'reclaim Bodh Gaya for Buddhists'. The Mahabodhi Society campaigned to overturn Shaivite Hindu control at Mahabodhi which was not easy. It involved arguing the case first to the British government and then to the Indian government.

After a long legal battle, the ownership dispute of the Mahabodhi Temple complex was partially resolved when the Government of India took control of the site in 1949. The court also chose the middle path and formed a committee, the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC), which included the Buddhist side, the Hindu side and the state government. This committee included both Hindu and Buddhist members. The Collector of the district was appointed the chairman of this committee. Presently, the responsibility of managing the Mahabodhi Temple rests with this committee and the temple is being run undisputedly and efficiently. There is peace in the town and more than 40 Buddhist monasteries and many hotels have been built here.

The year 2002 saw another feather in the cap of Mahabodhi Temple complex. Recognizing the historical and aesthetical value of the site, UNESCO included the Mahabodhi Temple Complex in its World Heritage List on 27 June 2002. The history of Bodh Gaya though complex spans over centuries. This place's transformation from a forest to a busy town, becoming the most important place of Buddhism with Buddha's enlightenment, its patronage by many kings, its destruction by many invaders, its restoration by the colonial empire, the establishment of many Buddhist monasteries by South Asian countries and the reconstruction of Bodh Gaya are some of the important milestones.

Bodh Gaya stands tall, is abuzz with activities and has achieved the greatest glory. It is indeed amazing. There is immense peace here, which can only be experienced by visiting this place. All that can be said is that there is no other place like Bodh Gaya on earth.

Source: *All old pictures are recreated*
Contents: *Bodh Gaya, Buddhist Acharya Shanti Swarupa Buddhist, Samyak Publications.*
Image: *Mahabodhi, The Great Buddhist Temple at Bodh Gaya, Major General, Sir A. Cunningham, London, 1892*



BUDDHIST MONK TRAINING SCHOOL
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MISSION
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Timeline of Bodh Gaya

- Buddha attained enlightenment around 400 BCE
- Bodhi tree enclosure and throne construction around 250 BCE
- Construction of Stone railings around 100 BCE
- Construction of Mahabodhi Temple around 300 BCE
- Hiuen Tsang visited Bodh Gaya 637 AD
- First Burmese restoration around 1050 AD
- Second Burmese restoration around 1295 AD
- Third Burmese restoration 1875 AD
- Renovation by Archaeological Survey of India 1890 AD
- Establishment of Mahabodhi Society 1891 AD
- Added in UNESCO's World Heritage List 2002 AD

Buddhist Monasteries: Art and creative expressions

The murals of Buddhist monasteries are painted in the traditional style. The paintings depict important stories, truths and values of Buddhism. These beautiful paintings not only provide visitors insights into the spiritual and religious ideas of Buddhism but are also a virtual treat for them.

The paintings are decorated with unique and beautiful colours and are carefully placed to attract all. These paintings are usually done at the entrances of Buddhist temples and monasteries, where their bright colours and vivid designs help in drawing the attention of all visitors i.e. pilgrims and tourists.

The murals combine traditional techniques and colours to create magnificent and attractive images. These paintings depict the main stories of Buddhism, wonderful scenes, images of divine people and other important religious symbols. These paintings were specially created on walls during religious festivals, prayers and ceremonies.

Another specialty of these paintings is that they have preserved Buddhist culture and religion for generations to come. The upbeat colours awaken the soul and relax the devotees visiting the Buddhist monasteries and temples.

Cave paintings also used a similar style which can still be seen at many places in India. One of the most beautiful are the Ajanta caves situated in Maharashtra. These beautiful murals from the Jataka tales, display the stories of Buddha's life.

The paintings of Avalokiteshvara Padmapani and Vajrapani in cave number-1 are quite interesting. Caves located in Bagh, Madhya Pradesh also display some fine murals.

As time progressed, Buddhist paintings also transformed and moved from caves to the walls of monasteries which became the residences of the Buddhist monks. Today, murals are an integral part of a Buddhist monastery. A Buddhist Vihar cannot be imagined without painted walls depicting Buddha's life.

Buddhist monasteries exhibit important symbols of Buddhism through these wall paintings. Some of these are —

1. Lord Buddha: The image of Lord Buddha is usually shown in the paintings. This indicates the immense faith and reverence that the followers of Buddhism has on Lord Buddha.

2. Buddhist Wheel: The Dharma Wheel, also known as the Buddhist Wheel, is widely depicted. The wheel represents the path of liberation from worldly sufferings and is associated with the belief of establishing and following the path of truth.

3. Dharmapadda: Dharmapaddas are symbols or emblems and are often depicted in paintings displayed on the walls of Buddhist monasteries. These depict various religious stories, teachings and values of life.

4. Bodhisattvas: Many Buddhist paintings feature images of Bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas are revered enlightened beings, upholding highest Buddhist values & ideals and having compassion for all human beings.

Monasteries of Bodh Gaya

Abodes of Cultural Amalgamation of South Asia

Bodhgaya is visited by thousands of people. It is difficult to say how many of them are Buddhists and how many follow other beliefs and faiths. Bodh Gaya, undoubtedly holds the same place for the followers of Buddhism as Mecca holds for Muslims.

This place holds equal importance for art lovers, sculptors, established architects and craftsmen. Calling it an art lover's paradise would not be an exaggeration. Travellers also frequent this place.

Bodh Gaya is unique in many ways. What makes it distinct are the various Buddhist monasteries located here, which have been constructed by the South Asian countries in the 20th century. These monasteries, built within a radius of three kilometres of the Mahabodhi Temple, are the bearers of the culture of their respective countries. Decorated with bright colours, these monasteries uphold stories with a strong message. Each component in the structure of the monuments signifies something. A deeper meaning is conveyed by everything be it the colour or various shapes, or paintings.

All the Buddhist monasteries have similar structures, but their decoration makes them different. Colours have special importance here and they also represent their respective countries. White and golden colours are predominant in the Buddhist monasteries of Thailand. The artisans use coloured stones, glass and traditional Thai art form to decorate them. On the other hand, the Buddhist monasteries of Burma are adorned with wood carving. There is a unique Buddha statue here which is made from bamboo straws. Similarly, natural settings and nature has been given special importance in the Buddhist monastery of Vietnam. A small forest has been created here which lends a special aura to the main temple which makes it a sight worth seeing. The idols of this temple have a copper tone and the artisans have defined even the minutest thing beautifully with their art. Traditional architectural style of Vietnam is used in this monastery.

Let us know about all the elements that make these Buddhist monasteries special. The architectural style of these Buddhist monasteries is the first feature that varies with countries. However, some elements are common in the style of all the monasteries situated here. The following structures are commonly included in the design and architecture at Bodh Gaya.

Viharas: These serve as the residential block of the complex. They are usually built for meditation, study, and spiritual practice. The layout and design provides for separation of residential rooms and halls for religious functions.

Stupas: A stupa is a Buddhist temple used for meditation. Stupas are mound or dome-shaped and always include a pathway surrounding it that is used for meditative walking. The word has originated from Sanskrit which means 'heap' or 'pile'. The oldest stupa resembles a heap of earth.

They were usually built near or adjacent to chaityas and Viharas and used for public service or religious functions.

Buddhist monasteries have many other important elements apart from the architectural styles. These elements are inspired by specific Buddhist sects and the culture and traditions of the people living in the region. Some of the important elements are as follows:—

1. Sculptures: Sculptures have special importance in Buddhist monasteries. These statues may be symbols of Buddhist deities, Bodhisattvas and other important religious objects. The size of the statues, their features and the display of the artistry of the sculptor are important elements.

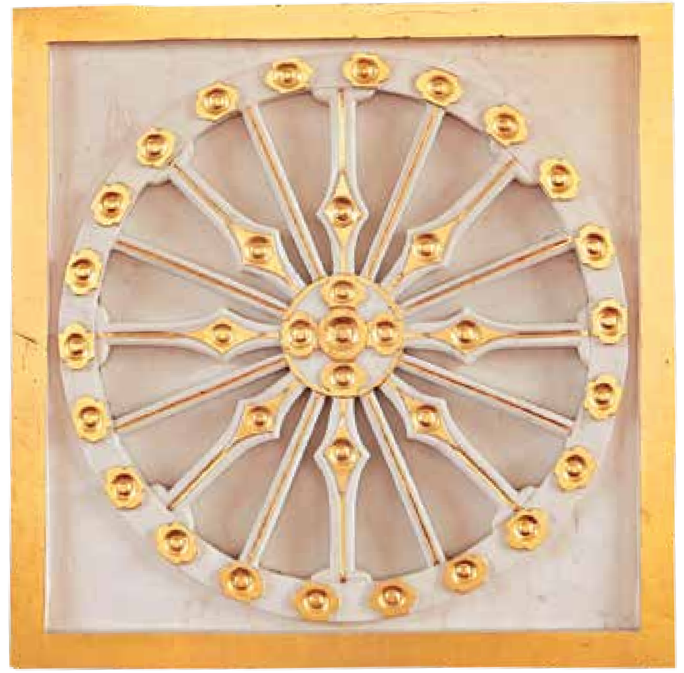
2. Vastu Shastra or architecture: Vastu Shastra plays an important role in the design and construction of the monasteries. It defines principles of design, layout, measurements, ground preparation,

space arrangement, and spatial geometry etc. for construction of temples and shrines.

These are some of the major elements that are visible in Buddhist monasteries. Each monastery has its own characteristics and architectural style can also vary according to the sect or country it represents.

Buddhist monasteries include various elements of art and culture in addition to architectural styles. The monasteries of different cultures and regions may have different art forms and cultural representations. Some of the main examples are:—

Wheel of Life in Thangka Painting: Thangka painting shows a wheel-like structure with many figures, it is also called the Wheel of Life or Bhavachakra. It is a complex artwork that depicts the Buddhist universe. The wheel is held by a strong power source at the top and symbolizes impermanence, portraying the life cycle (i.e. the process of birth, ageing, sickness and death), is transient, dynamic and eternal.



Dharma Chakra

(Dharma Wheel)

The Dharma Chakra is an important symbol of Buddhism. In Buddhist monasteries established in different parts of the world, Dharma Chakra is usually installed inside or outside the temple with elaborate structures.

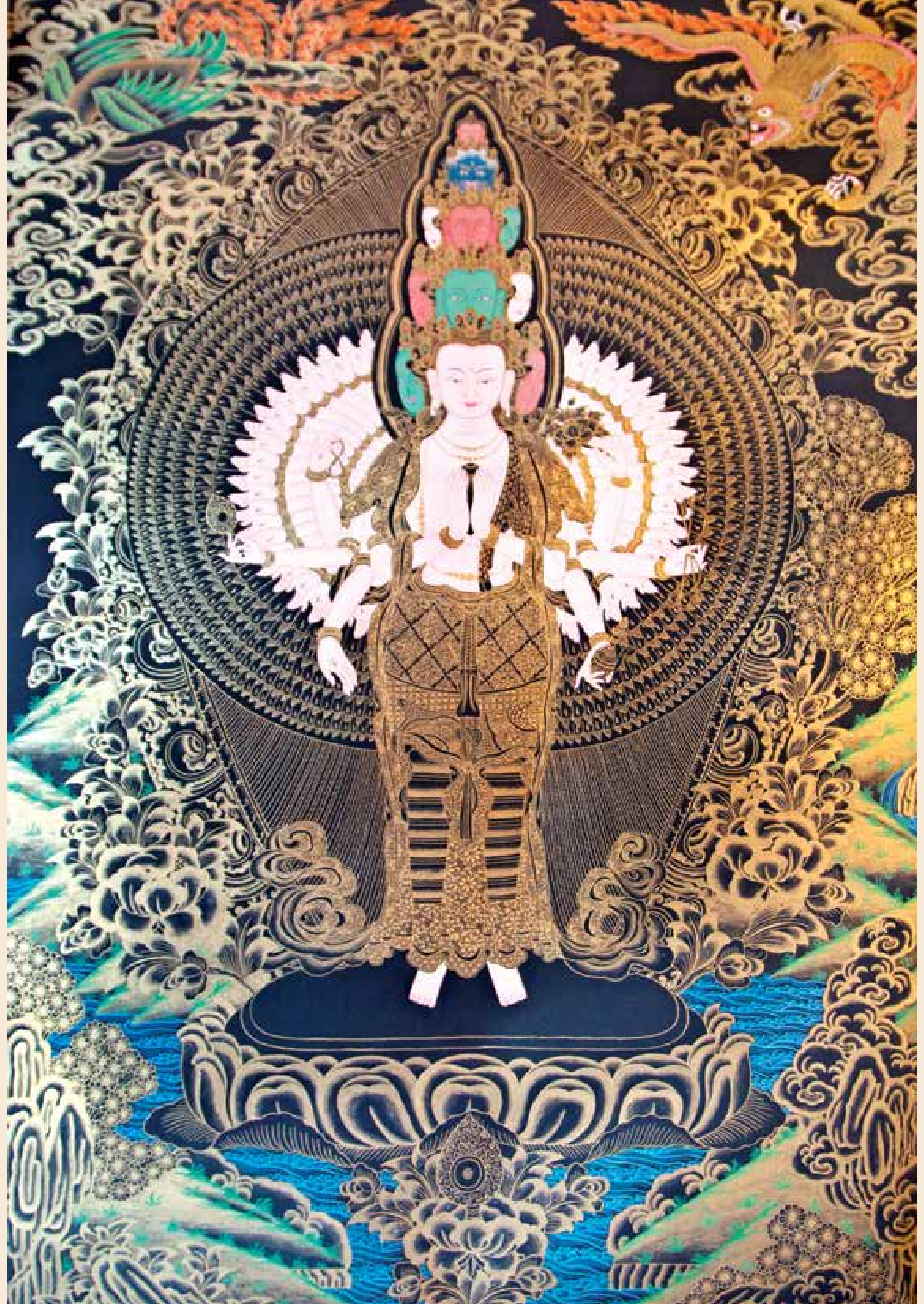
In the early days of Buddhism, the Buddha was worshipped without a physical appearance and the followers considered wheel as the Buddha. It is widely depicted in most of the Buddhist monasteries. The Dharma Wheel signifies many traits —

Symbol of Dharma: Dharma Chakra is a symbol of correct religion and establishes the path of Dharma. It signifies Chakravarti Dharma which upholds celibacy, eternity, supreme power and wisdom.

Symbol of a focused mind: Dharma Chakra is also used for mindfulness and concentrating. It helps in mental focus and clarity about one's existence.

Symbol of celibacy: Dharma Chakra is the symbol of celibacy which is combined with awareness, truth, self-restraint, vigour and firmness. It is an important sign that we should control our senses and follow the path of celibacy.

Freedom from worldly sufferings: Dharma Chakra indicates that our life is short and instead of being caught up in the worldly affairs, we should move towards stability and liberation. It also denotes that we should experience a stable and self-absorbed life beyond materialistic things.



Thangka Painting

Thangka painting is an important art form and aspect of Buddhist culture which represents the historical and philosophical basis of Buddhism. These paintings portray Buddha, Bodhisattva, Dakshinmukhi, Chhatrapati and other objects of worship and significance.

Thangka paintings are considered to be from Tibet, however there is some claim that this style may have evolved in India or China and bears imprints of Nepal also. Cave painting were the earliest known Buddhist art form that primarily used natural colours. We can still see these in the Ajanta caves and also in some parts of China. Later on the same style was illustrated on cloth. A Thangka painting has a main Buddhist deity in the centre and other Gods are depicted around it.

This art form spread across the world along with the Buddhist monks who travelled for spiritual quest, in search of knowledge or for creating awareness about Buddhism. In this way, this art form was not confined to Tibet and Nepal only. This style was found in every place where Tibetan Buddhism spread and flourished, including Russia, north-eastern China, parts of Mongolia, Northern and eastern parts of India like Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Sikkim, Dharamshala, Lahaul & Spiti in Himachal Pradesh. This style combined some elements or designs of the local art of the area where it spread. Thus, many variations of this art style have been found.

Thangka paintings were used in the ancient times to educate Buddhist monks. In this painting, events related to the life of Buddha are depicted in a beautiful style. The art is also used as a method of meditation by Buddhist monks. The main colours used in this painting are red, green, blue and yellow. The colour red is considered as a symbol of Lamas, yellow of the Buddha and blue signifies eternity.

An eye for details is the uniqueness of this art form and even the minutest design is highlighted. The subjects of these Thangkas are – religious events, educational purpose, forms of God, nature etc. The thangkas of Sikkim depict snow-capped peaks of Mt. Kanchenjunga, considered as the God protecting Sikkim, the serpent God, etc. Some depict the cycle of life, along with Yama, the God of death, placed at the top. These paintings focus on the sufferings of life, their causes and solutions.

Thangka paintings add life to Buddhist monasteries and are exceptionally special. It is a visual medium of education through which Buddha and his teachings, as well as other gods and bodhisattvas, are also illustrated.

Mandala

Mandalas made from clay, stone or through lithography and thangka art are very popular in monasteries. They symbolize religious figures and have an important position in Buddhist culture.

Buddhist philosophy gives prominence to the Mandala which is a graphical pattern. It uses creative and religious symbols as design elements and expresses a state of peace and bliss.

Mandala is widely used in Buddhist philosophy and is used as an object of worship, for meditation and understanding psychology. It is used to pray & reflect, design Buddhist structures or strategic palaces, connect with the supreme law and transform one's life.

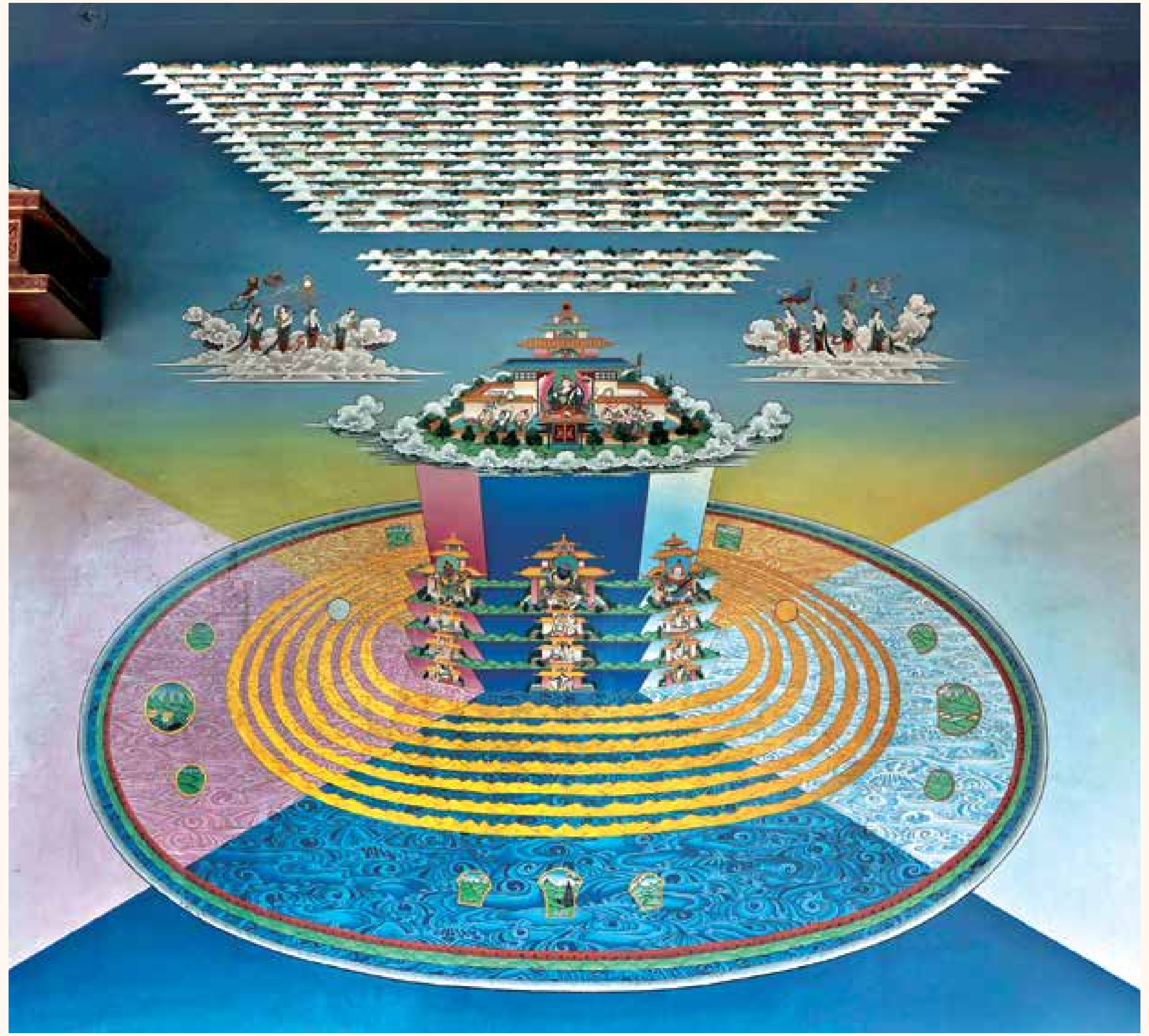
A Mandala depicts religious and spiritual principles by means of various colours, geometrical designs, and the realization of self-control. The use of colours in a Mandala gives mental peace and thoughtfulness. Using a mandala during meditation helps in concentration and soul searching, reach a state of awareness, and fosters spiritual growth.

A mandala contributes for spiritual growth in the following ways—

Peace of mind: Meditating with the help of a mandala can make one calm and steady the mind. It gives a feeling of inner peace by relieving one from anxiety, stress, and fear.

Brilliant meditation: While meditating on the cultural symbols of a mandala, you take your mind into a meditative state. It enhances mental power, thinking ability, and communication skills.

Soul realization: The shapes and colours of the mandala enhance the practice of mindfulness. It helps to imbibe the principles that lead to absolute happiness and satisfaction.



Self- discipline: By focusing on a mandala, one needs abject attention that spans time and moves beyond the constraints of physical boundaries. It thus helps the mind to focus and increases concentration.

A mandala enables to realize the true nature of all phenomena, awakens one towards spirituality which is considered as the ultimate reality, and wholeness, encompassing the unity of all existence.

'Prayer Flags'

Numerous colourful 'prayer flags' adorn many places throughout Bodh Gaya. These flags have a special significance in Buddhism. Many old scriptures and Buddhist texts have mentioned the significance of prayer flags and are considered ideal for readers. There are many colours used in these flags that convey a special meaning. The preferred colour is blue followed by white, red, green and yellow, which represent the five elements i.e. sky, air, fire, water and earth. Each colour denotes one of the five elements. Blue and white represent sky and air respectively, while red represents fire or energy, green denotes water, and yellow represents earth.

Flags in the five colours signifying the five elements are arranged in a specific way to connect with positive energy and invoke spirituality. A particular order is followed while placing them. The flags are carefully placed from left to right starting from blue, followed by white, red, green and yellow. These flags have Buddhist mantras written on them, and as a mark of respect are never placed on the ground.

Flags are hoisted in religious institutions, Buddhist monasteries and temples. These flags are decorated with mantras and religious symbols in different colours.

Flags always fly high to spread positivity in the environment. The fluttering of a flag as the wind blows, sounds like the chant of mantras and prayers. It is believed that the power of the mantras is enhanced by flags that bless the place with happiness and bliss.

Priests referred to as acharyas, are the ones that invoke these flags. The prayer flags can be seen in temples, ancient chaityas and are an integral part of the culture of hilly regions.

Flags symbolize the messages of Lord Buddha which reflect a yearning for global peace and cooperation. They spread peace and love amongst people in society or in the religious institution or community where they are used.

Flags hold significance in Buddhism, embodying conspicuous and inconspicuous facets. Prayer flag, functioning both as a symbol and a medium is important for religious practices.

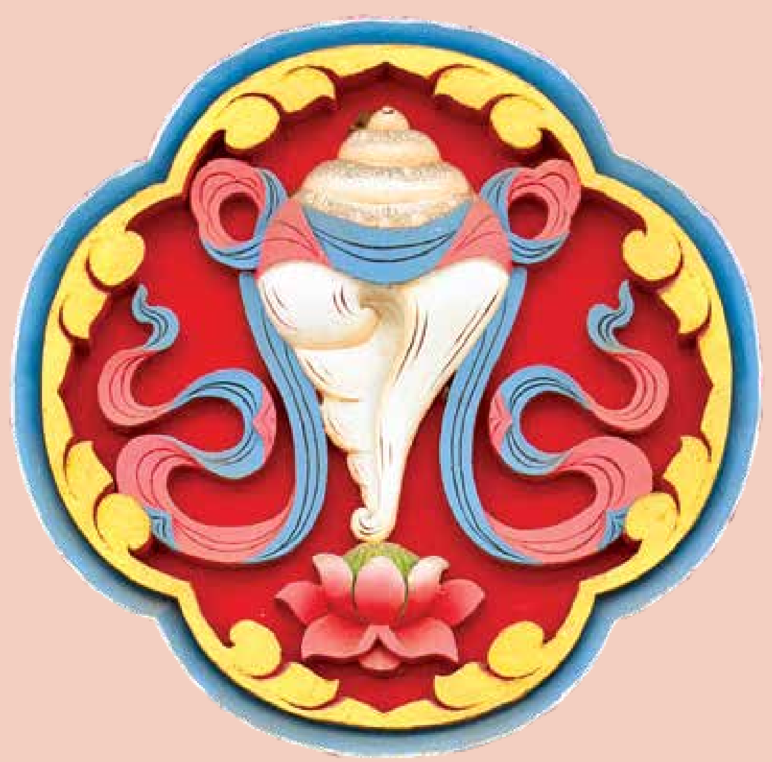
In practical terms, prayer flags represent different aspects of the Buddhist Sangha or community. They symbolize harmony, love, kindness, the eminence of Lord Buddha's teachings, and spirituality that are inherent in Buddhism. The flags exemplify the camaraderie and solidarity among the Buddhist community.

Butter Lamp

Butter lamps are a common sight in Buddhist monasteries. Sometimes spacious chambers are specifically built to house these lamps, ensuring they remain continuously lit. This prompts the question: Why are butter lamps illuminated in all Buddhist monasteries, and what purpose do they serve?

Within Buddhism, the illumination of a butter lamp represents knowledge and as the lamp glows darkness paves way to light, hence the lamp signifies the transition from ignorance to wisdom. It encourages the pursuit of elevating consciousness towards wisdom and achieving the enlightenment of the Buddha mind. The butter lamp is utilized in Buddhist Sangha, monasteries, and other sacred places as an aid for meditation, fostering peacefulness of mind, and symbolizing enlightenment. It also embodies the ideals of knowledge and celibacy. As the butter lamp glows, its light embodies the anticipation of enlightenment and helps in achieving pure consciousness.

In this capacity, the butter lamp establishes the path to enlightenment within Buddhism and highlights the importance of virtues such as wisdom, knowledge, discipline, and purity. It is regarded as a conduit for expressing devotion and spiritual insight.



Conch shell

The conch shell, also known as shankha, is a special religious symbol in Buddhism and can be found in every Buddhist monastery. This sacred object is associated with global events, universal issues, and psychological facets.

One distinguishing characteristic of the conch shell is its single aperture, which results in producing a delightful sound. This signifies the amalgamation of all elements into one. This melodious sound, referred to as 'unmatta', brings the mind together and evokes feelings of harmony and tranquillity. Additionally, it represents a form of Bodhisattva in Buddhism, serving as a reminder of many in body one in mind.

In Buddhism, the conch shell is also called Yatra or Mahayana Sambodhi. A conch shell's sound is used to help the mind to focus and concentrate and assist practitioners in meditation. As Sambodhi, the conch shell is helpful to teach philosophical lessons to votaries of Buddhism.

Largely, the conch shell stands as a crucial symbol in the Buddhist realm, serving the purpose of unity, purity, and true-self.

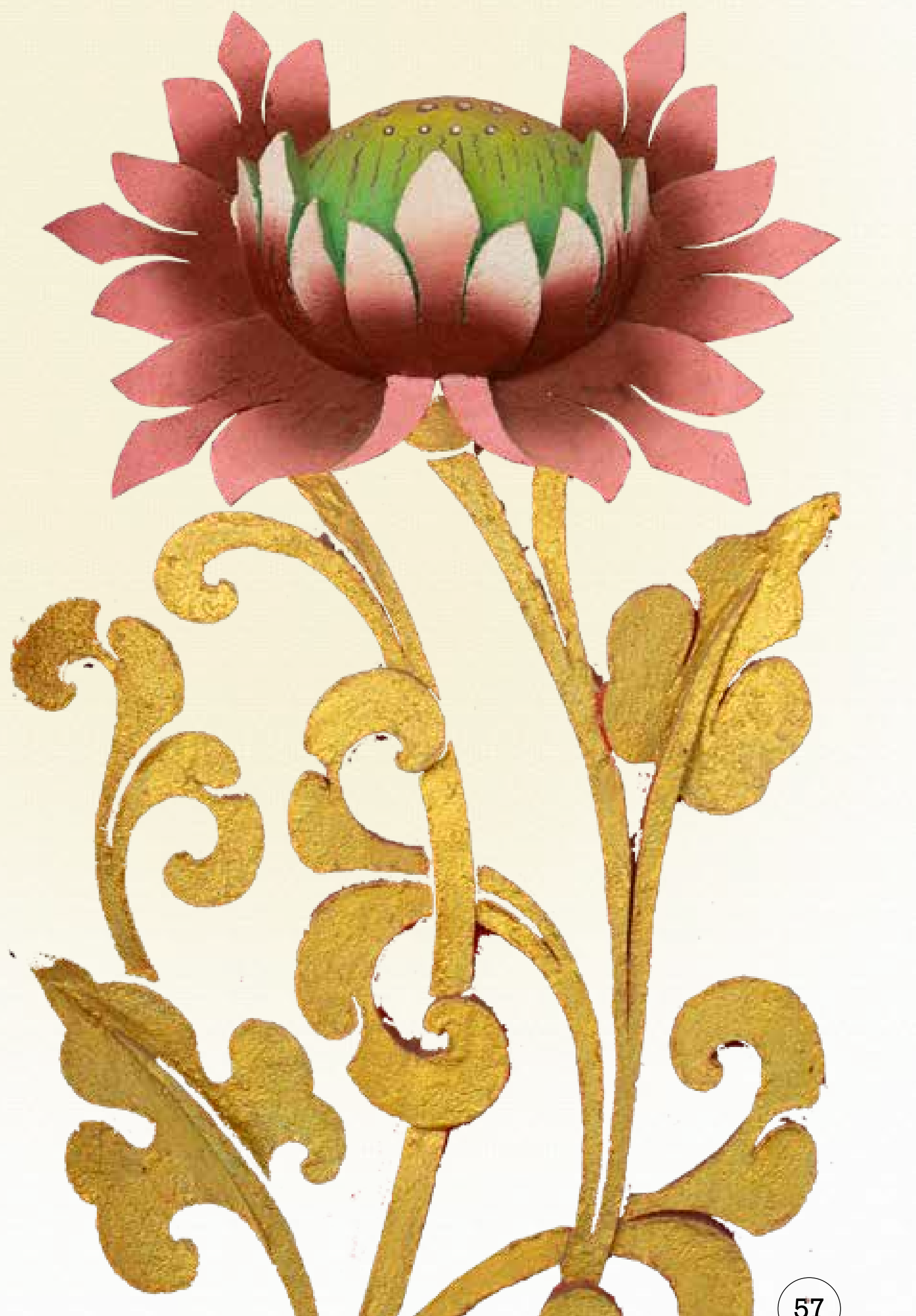
Lotus

Flower vendors are a frequent sight around the Mahabodhi Temple. Among the flowers they sell, the lotus flower is the most popular. It is believed to be Buddha's favourite flower and holds great significance within Buddhism. The lotus is considered a symbol of purity and simultaneity, representing fundamental Buddhist principles.

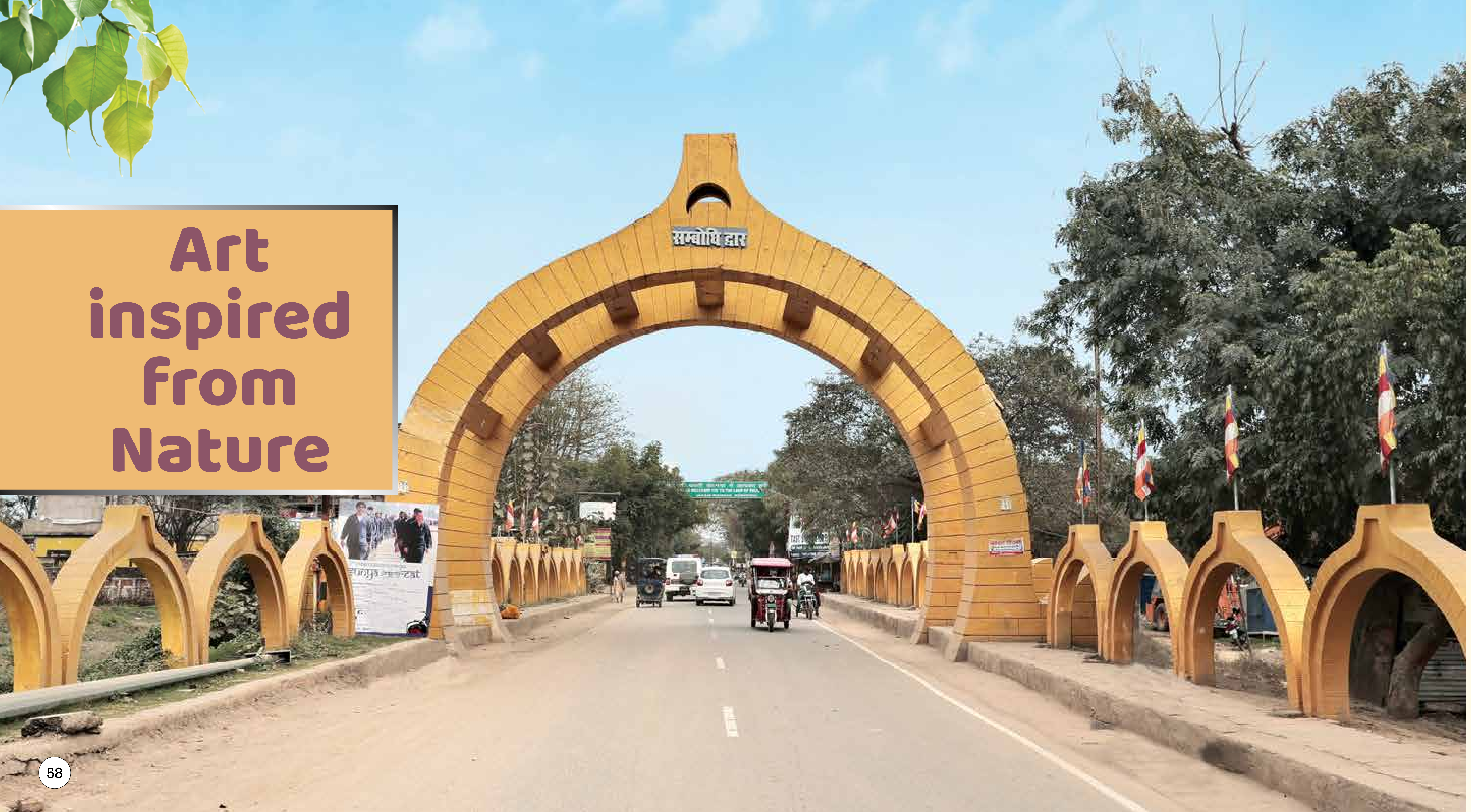
The symbolism of the lotus lies in its natural bloom, renunciation, purity, and the yearning for release from worldly affairs. Furthermore, the lotus signifies purity, beauty, and serenity, guiding Buddhists on leading a desire free and nature-centric way of life.

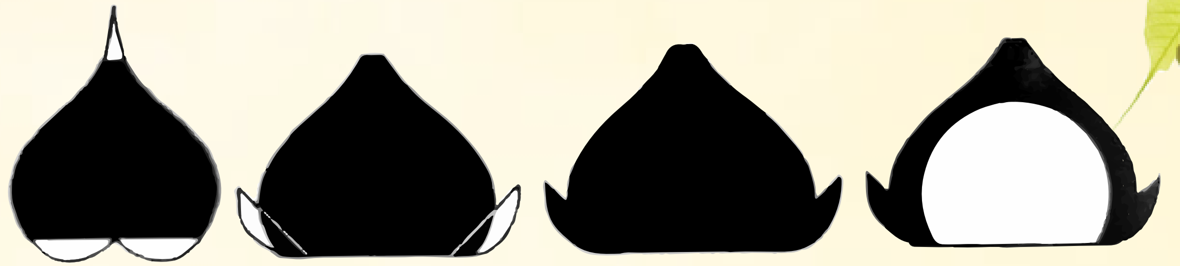
In Mahayana Buddhism, the lotus is known as 'Padma'. The six petals of the lotus represent its ascent above worldly desires, shielding against the cycle of birth and death. It encourages Buddhist practitioners to uphold values, study, and imbibe virtuous qualities.

Hence, the lotus symbolizes purity, liberation from worldly attachments, and personal transformation in Buddhism.



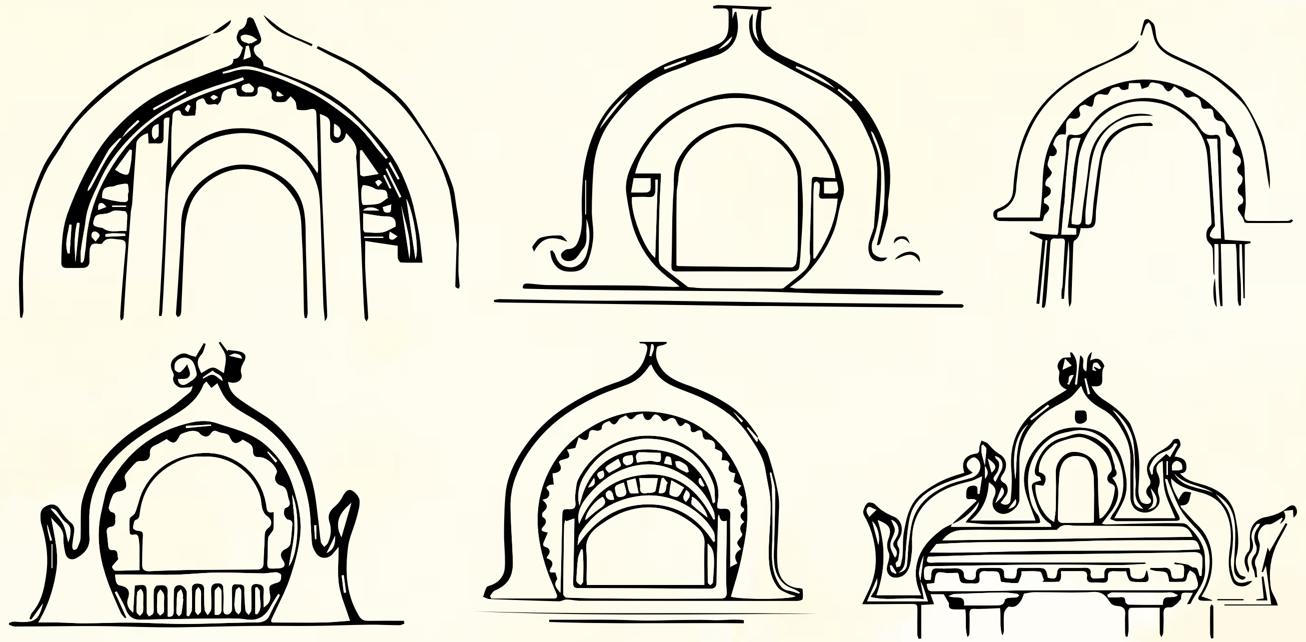
Art inspired from Nature





Observing Buddhist architecture evokes a strong connection to nature. Acharya Shanti Swaroop Bauddh has analysed this in the book "Bodh Gaya," using images to illustrate this concept. The gate design seen in Buddhist stupas, temples, and monasteries is directly inspired by the leaf of the Mahabodhi tree. This particular shape is achieved by trimming the sides and upper portion of a leaf of a Bodhi tree and can also be seen on the entrance of Lomas Rishi Caves, Ajanta Caves and Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi which is a relatively modern building.

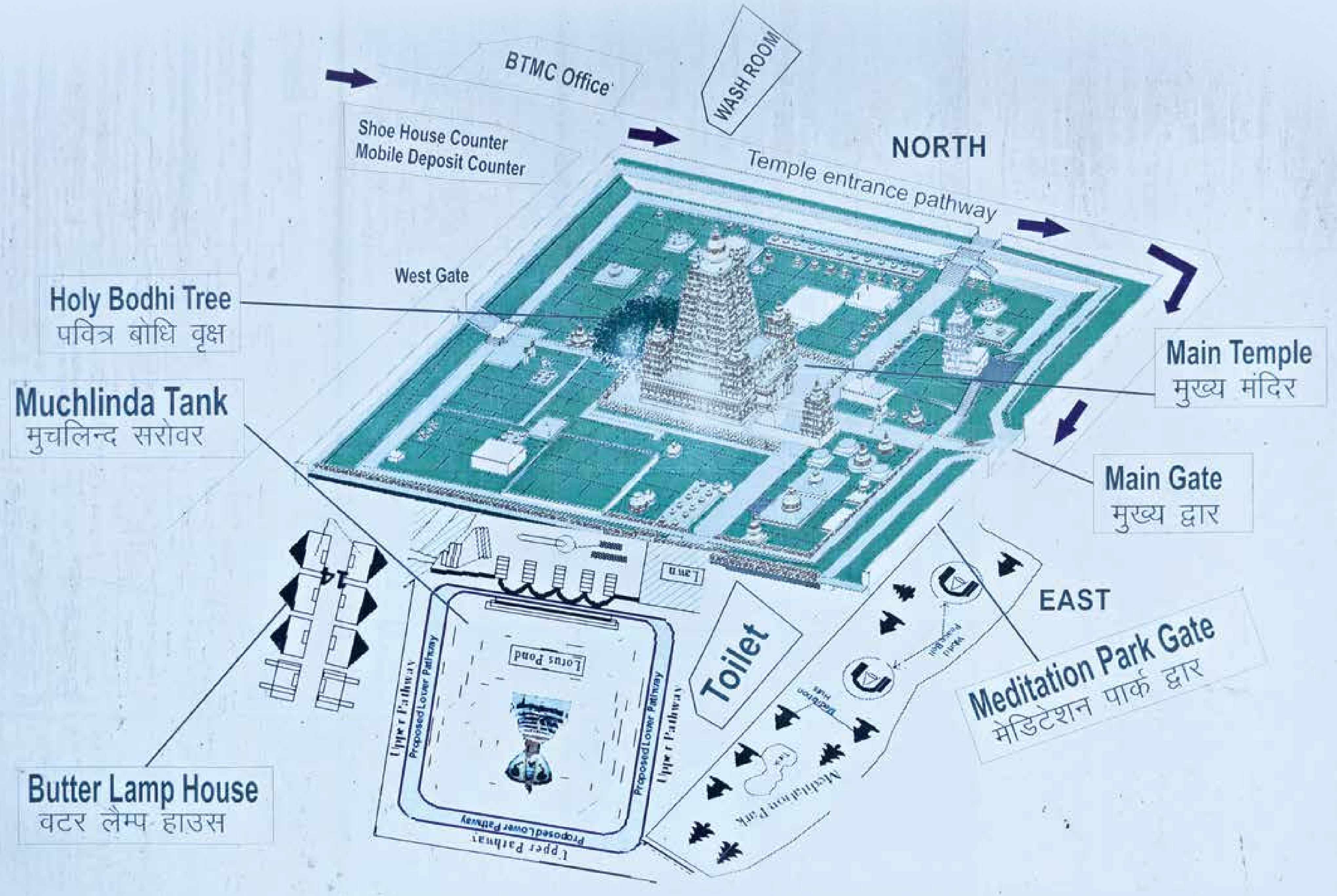
This distinctive design has found its way into the architecture of the Bodh Gaya museum and is now increasingly incorporated into the entrances of numerous temples. Symbolizing the rich heritage of Buddhist artistic expression, this design has become symbolic of Buddhist craftsmanship and creativity.



*(Source: **Bodh Gaya, Bauddhacharya Shanti Swaroop Bauddh, Samyak Prakashan**)*

UNESCO World Heritage Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Coordinates : 24.69591, 84.99241


BTMC Office
WASH ROOM
Shoe House Counter
Mobile Deposit Counter
NORTH
Temple entrance pathway
West Gate
Holy Bodhi Tree
पवित्र बोधि वृक्ष
Main Temple
मुख्य मंदिर
Muchlinda Tank
मुचलिन्द सरोवर
Main Gate
मुख्य द्वार
EAST
Lotus Pond
Upper Pathway
Proposed Lower Pathway
Toilet
Meditation Park
Meditation Park Gate
मेडिटेशन पार्क द्वार
Butter Lamp House
बटर लैम्प हाउस

DONATION

Uruvela was the largest forest in the Magadha Empire. Prince Siddhartha spent seven weeks in the Uruvela forest at the age of 29 after he renounced his royalty. Acharya Sushil had identified seven different locations in the Mahabodhi temple complex where the prince spent a week each. Behind the temple, there is a Bodhi or Peepal tree where Prince Siddhartha underwent extreme austerities without food or water for a week, ultimately attaining enlightenment on a full moon day i.e. Vaishakh Purnima in 528 BC, earning the name Buddha, while the tree came to be known as the Bodhi tree.

The area where Buddha meditated is known as Vajrasana or the Diamond throne. It is a revered spot for Buddhists. Sir Alexander Cunningham discovered Vajrasana during an excavation, providing evidence that Buddha achieved enlightenment while seated there. Additionally, there is historical evidence that Emperor Ashoka initially worshipped the Mahabodhi tree by offering milk to the tree. In the present times, the throne is enclosed by a sandstone railing. It has been relocated, restored, and replaced numerous times in the past and is now placed behind the Mahabodhi Temple.

The current Bodhi tree is the fifth generation of the tree where Buddha attained enlightenment and has a significant connection to Emperor Ashoka. After the Kalinga War, Emperor Ashoka sought refuge in Buddhism, which was disliked by his wife Trishika. She expressed her disapproval by ordering that the Bodhi tree be cut.

Prior to this event, Ashoka's son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra traveled to Sri Lanka to spread the teachings of Buddhism and planted a branch of the Bodhi tree in Anuradhapuram. Subsequently, in Bodh Gaya, a new Bodhi tree sprouted in the same location, becoming the second generation Bodhi tree. However, the king of Bengal, Shashank, who did not believe in Buddhism, had the tree cut down. Despite this, the Bodhi tree grew again, only to succumb to nature later.

In 1880, British officer Sir Cunningham visited Bodh Gaya and arranged for two branches of the Bodhi tree to be brought from Sri Lanka. One branch was planted in Bodh Gaya, and the other in Sarnath. The current tree is approximately 150 years old and considered to be the fifth generation of the original tree.

In 1203 AD, the temple was attacked by Bakhtiar Khilji. The Mahabodhi Temple seen today is largely the result of renovations undertaken in the late 19th century, first by a Burmese mission and then by the Archaeological Survey of India. The temple's substantial brick, plaster, and concrete structure features a tower or shikhara situated above the central chamber sanctum sanctorum or garbha-griha, with four smaller towers or shikharas at its four corners.

The fourth site is a mango tree situated a little ahead of the chakramana sthal, known as Ratan Ghar. After deep meditation there, Buddha, understanding the cause of human suffering, imparted the five principles or Panchsheel for freeing oneself from the sufferings, consisting of five rules:

Non-violence, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not lie, do not use intoxicants.

Buddha spent the fifth week near the gate, deeply meditating under the Ajapala Nigrodha tree or Totoro tree, while nearby, the children of shepherds played. Not recognizing Buddha, the children mocked him, prompting him to enlighten them with the knowledge. Buddha replied that a person's greatness is determined not by birth, but by actions.

During the sixth week, Buddha meditated at the Muchalinda Sarovar or the Holy Pond. While in meditation, a powerful storm suddenly arose. In Pali language, Muchalinda means snake. To shield Buddha from the storm, the snake God encircled him from all sides, sheltering him with its hood. The actual lake associated with this event is located three kilometres ahead. However, Sir Alexander Cunningham constructed this lake within the temple premises in 1880. In 1984, the king of Burma placed a statue of the Muchalinda snake and the Buddha in the middle of the lake.

During the final week, Buddha meditated under a tree located to the south of the temple, known as the Rajayatna tree. Witnessing Buddha's meditation, two merchants belonging to the Utkala region (now Odisha), Tapassu and Bhallik, were deeply moved and decided to follow the path of Buddhism. They gifted him with a grass seat for meditation.

After 51 days of rigorous penance, Buddha attained enlightenment. Buddha proclaimed two mantras.

बुद्धम शरणम् गच्छामि
धम्मं शरणम् गच्छामि।

Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Dharmam Saranam Gacchami

Awakened to the supreme truth, Buddha preached his first sermon at Sarnath. A community of practioner called Sangha was formed. The third phrase was added to the two mantras which was

संघम शरणम गच्छामि।

Sangham Saranam Gacchami

Buddha continued to spread his teachings from Sarnath and eventually moved to Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh. He passed away at the age of 80 years on the full moon day or Buddha Purnima in 483 BCE.

The temple at this site was initially constructed 2300 years ago, with Emperor Ashoka contributing up to 50 feet of its height, which was later extended to 150 feet during the reign of king Samudragupta. The current temple has a height of 180 feet and a width of 50 feet, and is adorned by gooseberry-shaped golden urns at the top. These urns were a gift from the King of Thailand in 2013 and each weighs around three hundred kilograms.

In the tenth century, King Mahipal of Bengal placed the idol inside the sanctum sanctorum. This black stone idol is adorned with intricate gold work. The diamond embellishments at the top of the idol were donated by the King of Burma in 1992.

Following his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, Buddha spent a week meditating near the temple mound without averting his gaze. This is the reason that the temple is called *Animesh Lochan* (eyes) *Chaitya*.

During the third week, Buddha practiced walking meditation or Cankamana from east to west on the temple's right side, known as Chakramna Sthal. Legend has it that as Buddha walked, lotus flowers bloomed wherever his steps fell. To commemorate this, Emperor Ashoka carved lotus feet on black stones around 2300 years ago.

Eleven lotus flowers gifted by Emperor Ashoka adorn the ground, while Sir Alexander Cunningham crafted 19 lotus flowers on a nearby platform to honour Buddha.

Mahabodhi Tree

Coordinates : 24.6951, 84.9913

There are many interesting legendary tales associated with the Mahabodhi tree. Realizing its importance, Mahamoglayana planted this tree in Shravasti during the time of Mahatma Buddha. In 1811, it was a fully grown and flourishing tree, but fell down due to ageing and other natural reasons in 1876. Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang in his writings has confirmed that the Bodhi tree near Vajrasana was about 50 feet tall, thereby indicating its presence in the 7 Century AD.

The tree has withstood both natural and man-made hostilities and is indeed amazing. The evidence of the tree is also found in Sir Cunningham's writings. Ashoka's wife got it cut and poured honey, milk and buttermilk in the roots, to destroy it completely, but it again sprang to life.

King Shashank of Bengal also tried to destroy the tree by uprooting and burning the roots, however, King Purna Verma found the roots of this tree miraculously and within no time, the tree came to life growing to a height of ten feet.

Sir Cunningham has mentioned a sandstone railing surrounding and protecting it, when he first saw the Mahabodhi tree. Dr. Buchanan, who was visiting Bodh Gaya in 1811, described the tree as lush and large, approximate age to be around 100 years. However, upon Cunningham's return in 1862, he found the tree in a poor condition. Subsequent visits in 1871 and 1875, he observed further deterioration, culminating in the tree's collapse during a storm in 1876. In 1883, Alexander Cunningham and his colleagues J.D.M. Bugler and Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra replanted a branch brought from the original Bodhi tree in Anuradhapuram, Sri Lanka. The tree in Sri Lanka was planted by Ashoka's daughter Sanghamitra by taking a branch from the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya.

However, when Bakhtiar Khilji attacked the Mahabodhi Temple in 1203 AD to loot and plunder it, the Bodhi tree remained unharmed.

To safeguard the Mahabodhi tree, Burmese king Paranjit installed a double wooden railing which was later replaced with the one made of sandstone when Ashoka constructed the temple. Remnants of this ancient sandstone railing is displayed at the Bodh Gaya museum, while a modern replica surrounds the temple currently.

The Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) was established by the Government of India in 1949 to oversee the upkeep of the Mahabodhi Temple complex, marking a significant improvement in the tree's condition. Recognized as the main attraction of the complex, the Mahabodhi tree, as a 2600 year old legacy, the fifth generational of its lineage, attracts numerous visitors who meditate, offer perfumes, water, and light incense sticks to worship it. However, the activities around the tree, such as lighting of lamps and incense sticks, water accumulation, artificial light exposure, nutrient deficiencies, and fungal threats, were harming its health.

In view of these challenges, the BTMC engaged the esteemed Forest Research Institute (FRI) of Dehradun in 2007. Upon evaluating the tree's health, a report was drafted, outlining measures to ensure good health and condition of the tree. Scientific analysis, including DNA testing, confirmed the tree as a descendant of the original Bodhi tree. Recommendations from the institute guided the restoration efforts, resulting in the sustained health and enhanced appreciation of this ancient symbol.

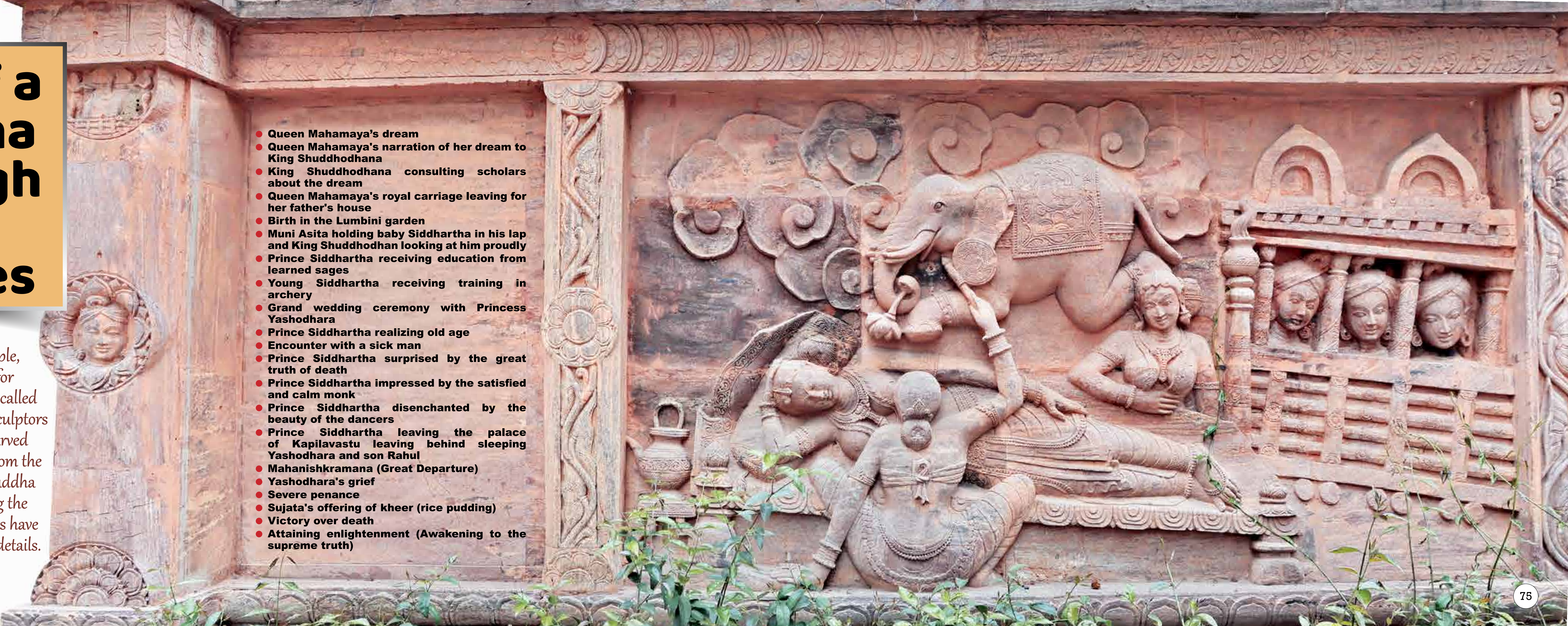
The Mahabodhi tree is the most important sacred place along with the main temple. The importance is increased as the tree we see presently is of the same lineage as the tree under which Siddhartha attained enlightenment. This was also confirmed by scientists of the Forest Research Institute Centre who carried out the DNA testing of this tree. The DNA report established the connection of the tree with the original Bodhi tree.

In consideration of the religious significance of this place, the scientists also recommended many steps related to the maintenance of the Mahabodhi tree and supervised the implementation. These efforts have ensured the well-being of the tree leading to positive outcomes. Presently, the Mahabodhi tree is in good health, fostering a deeper appreciation among visitors for this revered ancient heritage.

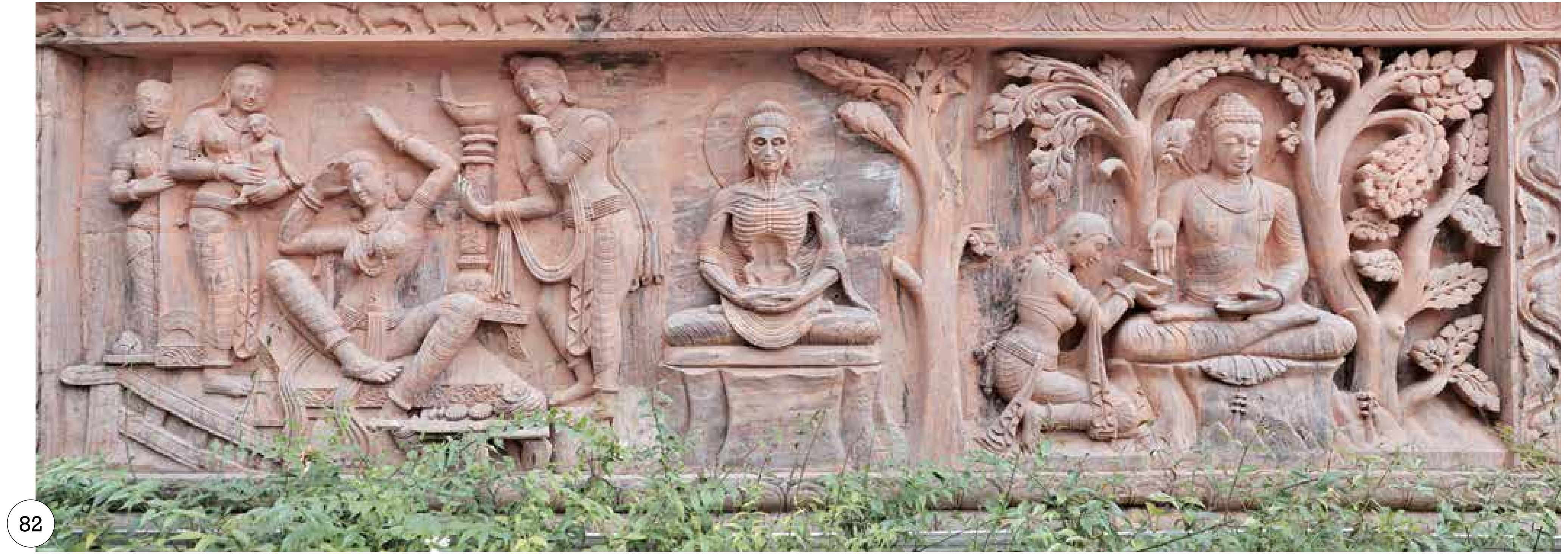
References: ***The Holy Bodhi Tree, NSK Harsh, Nongze Dorje Subhash Nautiyal, FRI, Dehradun***

Life of a Buddha through the statues

Around the Mahabodhi temple, there is a path for circumambulation called Pradakshina Path. Sculptors have intricately carved significant events from the life of Mahatma Buddha on the walls lining the path. These carvings have remarkable lifelike details.



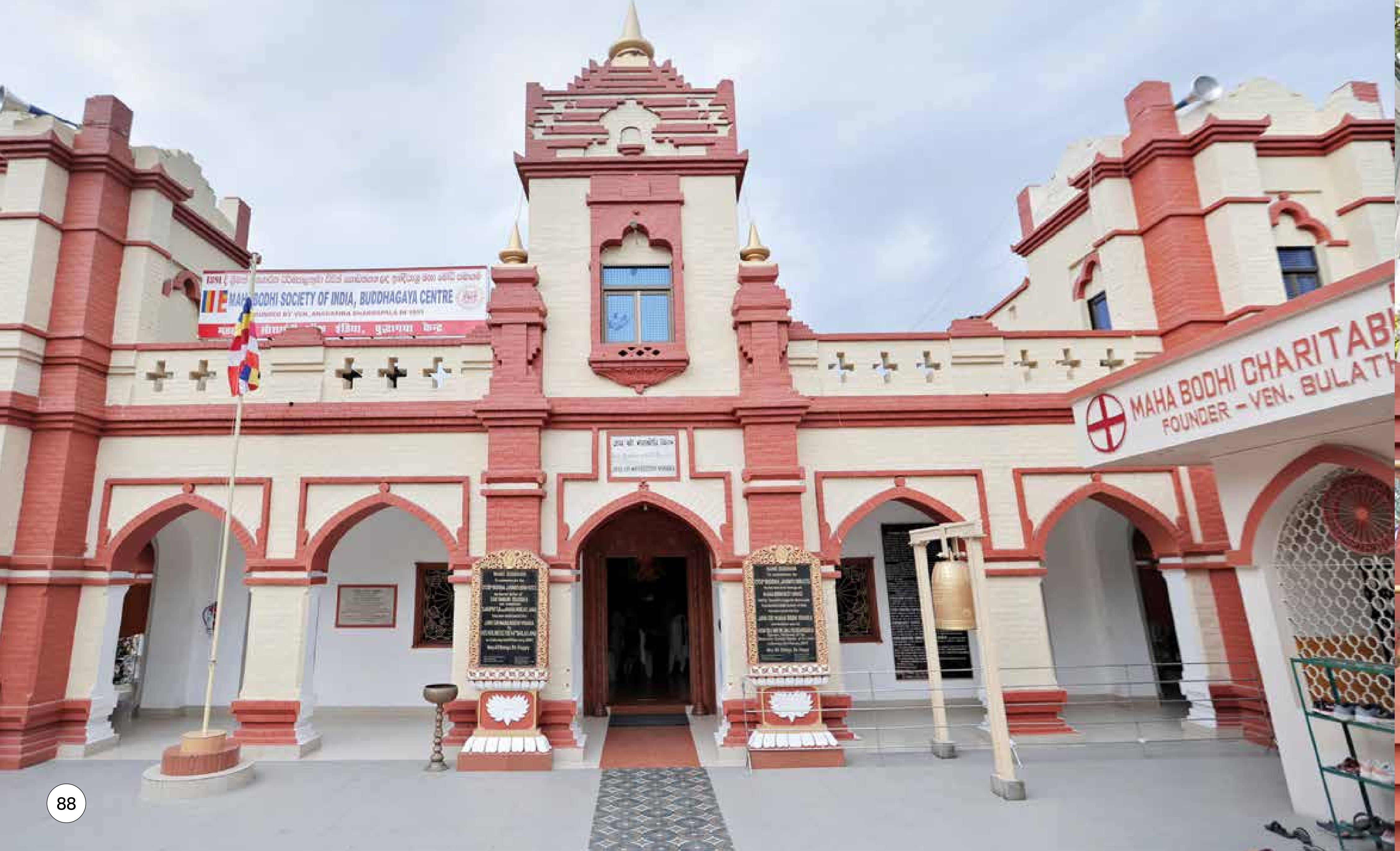
- **Queen Mahamaya's dream**
- **Queen Mahamaya's narration of her dream to King Shuddhodhana**
- **King Shuddhodhana consulting scholars about the dream**
- **Queen Mahamaya's royal carriage leaving for her father's house**
- **Birth in the Lumbini garden**
- **Muni Asita holding baby Siddhartha in his lap and King Shuddhodhan looking at him proudly**
- **Prince Siddhartha receiving education from learned sages**
- **Young Siddhartha receiving training in archery**
- **Grand wedding ceremony with Princess Yashodhara**
- **Prince Siddhartha realizing old age**
- **Encounter with a sick man**
- **Prince Siddhartha surprised by the great truth of death**
- **Prince Siddhartha impressed by the satisfied and calm monk**
- **Prince Siddhartha disenchanted by the beauty of the dancers**
- **Prince Siddhartha leaving the palace of Kapilavastu leaving behind sleeping Yashodhara and son Rahul**
- **Mahanishkramana (Great Departure)**
- **Yashodhara's grief**
- **Severe penance**
- **Sujata's offering of kheer (rice pudding)**
- **Victory over death**
- **Attaining enlightenment (Awakening to the supreme truth)**



Maha Bodhi Society of India

Coordinates : 24.69722, 84.99090

जय श्री महा बोधि विहार
JAYA SRI MAHA BODHI VIHARA
ජය ශ්‍රී මහා බෝධි විහාරය
! Namo Buddhaya !
MAHA BODHI SOCIETY OF INDIA
HOTEL
DISPENSARY


MAHA BODHI SOCIETY OF INDIA, BUDDHAGAYA CENTRE
FOUNDED BY VEN. ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA IN 1891
MAHA BODHI CHARITAB
FOUNDER - VEN. BULATH

UNDER ADVICE OF CHIEF SANG AYAK
GENERAL SECRETAR
MAHABODHI SOCIETY OF
DONATED BY
MR. SAMAN KULAR
MRS. SAMANTHI KULA NE
AESHAN - BUDDHIKE - NIMESH RALI
AND
MRS. CHANDRANI WETH
YATIYANTHO TA - SRILA
MAY THIS MERITORIOUS
HELP US ATTAIN TH
ULTIMATE BLE SS OF NIB

The Maha Bodhi Society of India is situated across the Mahabodhi temple adjacent to the Tibetan monastery. Established in the year 1891 by a 26 year old Sri Lankan youth named Don David Hewavitarne, who later came to be known as the Anagarika Dharmapala or the homeless one. A young Dharmapala on coming to India and visiting Bodh Gaya was shocked to see the abysmal condition of the Maha Bodhi temple, Maha Vihara and the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. He at once went back to Sri Lanka to form the Maha Bodhi Society of India, to liberate the Maha Bodhi Temple from the Mahant and restore the temple to its original stature. He also wanted to revive Buddhism in India where it lost its glory due to ignorance. It is mainly due to Dharmapala that Buddhism in its present state continues to thrive as a major world religion spreading the message of Buddha.

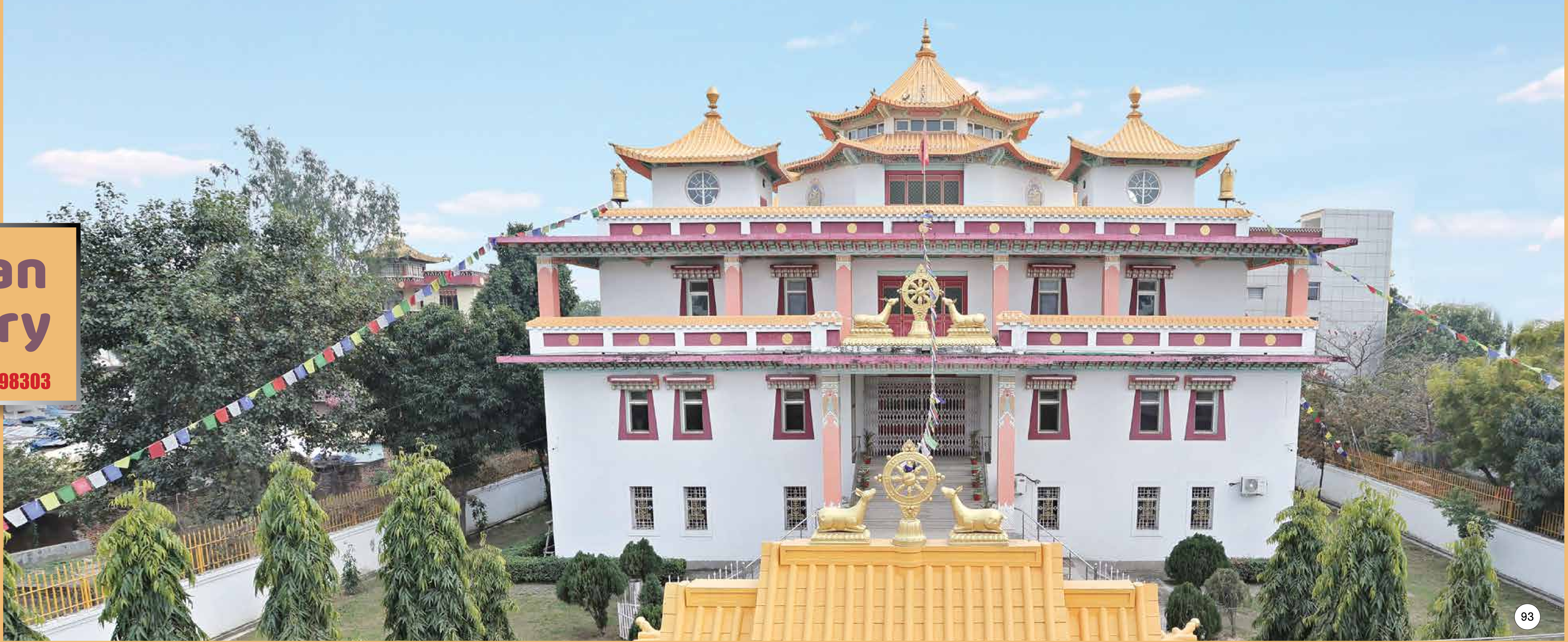
PROCLAIM THE DHAMMA WITH ZEST
OF SRI LANKA (CEYLON)

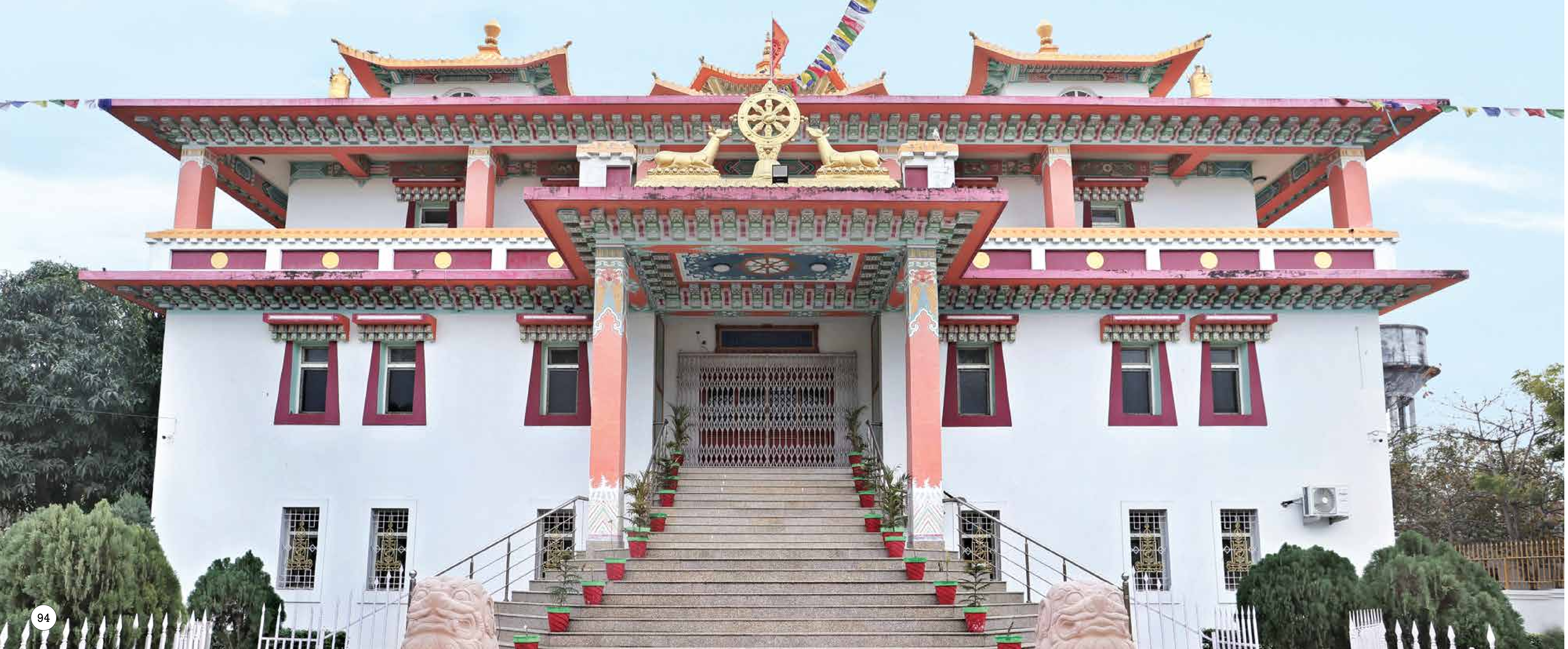
The Maha Bodhi Society of India serves as a premier Buddhist organisation. It was established for the purpose of reviving Buddhism in India and for restoring the ancient Buddhist shrines at Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kusinara. By spreading the teachings of Buddha and the historic significance of Bodh Gaya, where Siddhartha Gautam achieved enlightenment, Venerable Dharmapala created awareness both within India and internationally. Today, the Maha Bodhi Society maintains many centres across India and abroad, disseminating the teachings of the Enlightened One. The society remains steadfast in its commitment to Buddhism and its values, actively engaging in various initiatives to positively impact the lives of the underprivileged.

(Source: **Mahabodhi Society of India** *website:* **https://mbsiindia.org/about-us-2***)*

Mongolian Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69211, 84.98303



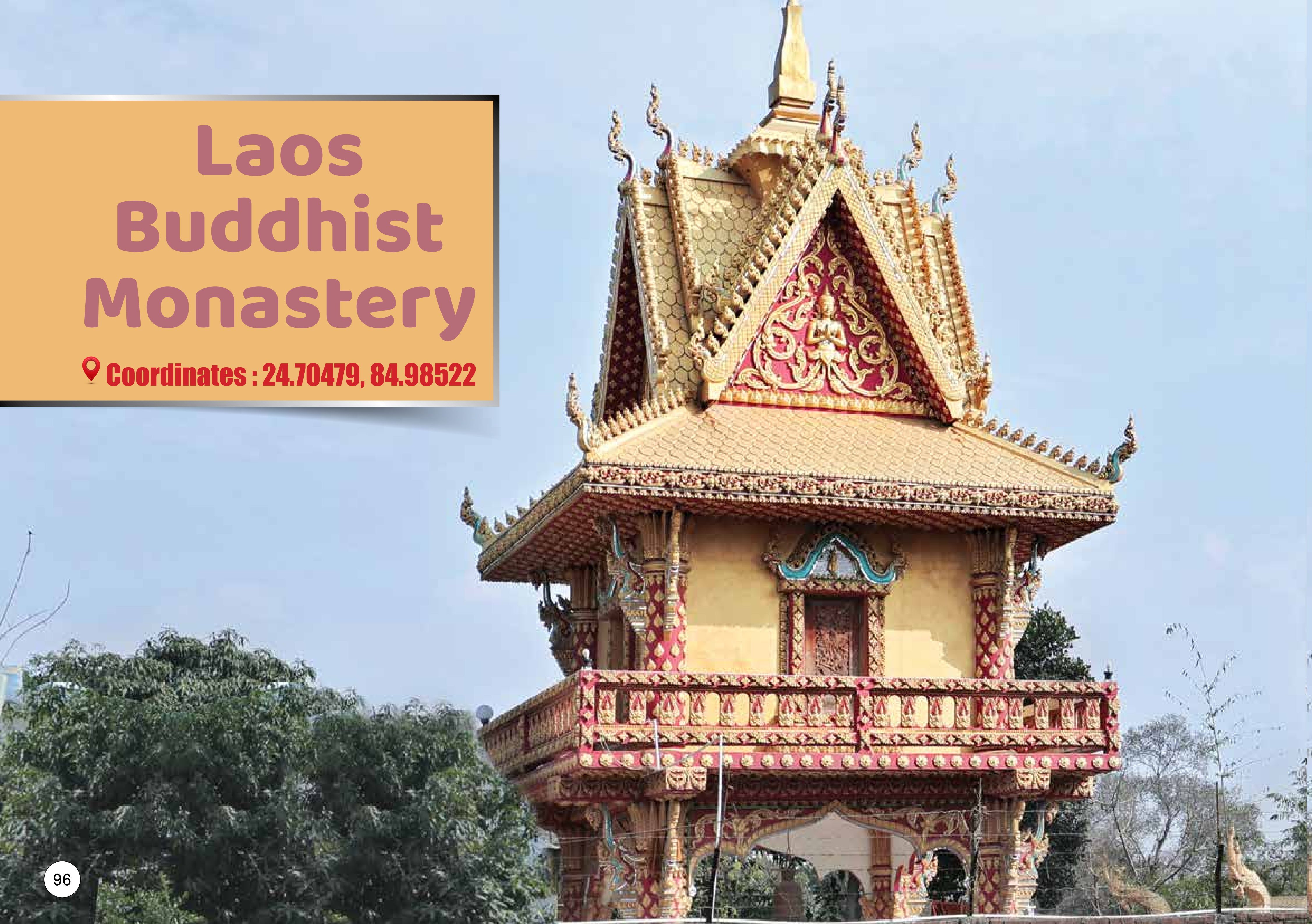


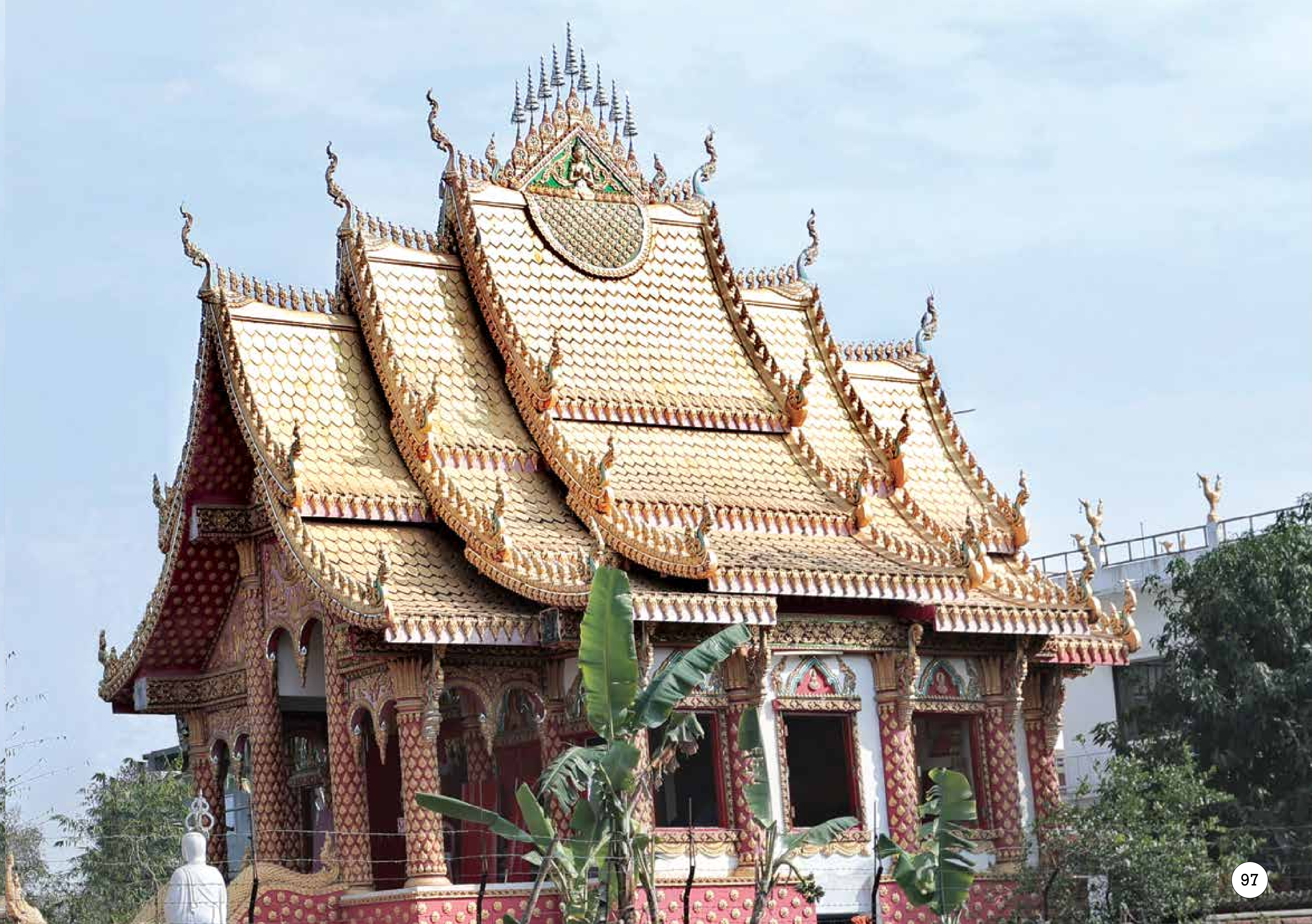
The Mongolian Buddhist Monastery lies 1.3 kilometres to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple, near the road that has an 80-foot high statue of Buddha. It stands tall as a symbol of friendly ties between India and Mongolia. The temple embodies the collaborative efforts of the esteemed Buddhist monk, 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche. Originally hailing from Ladakh, in India, Rinpoche relocated to Lhasa in the 1930s to pursue studies at the Drepung Monastery.

Rinpoche is known for his significant role in rejuvenating Buddhism in Mongolia. He also facilitated and coordinated the visit of the Dalai Lama to Mongolia in 1979, leading to an agreement enabling Mongolian monks to travel to India for Buddhist education. Subsequently, in January 2004, a pact was formalized between India and Mongolia for the establishment of a Mongolian-operated Buddhist monastery in Bodh Gaya, Bihar. This accord entailed the Bihar government providing a land grant at no cost for the monastery's construction. It also resulted in the then Prime Minister of Mongolia, Nambaryn Enkhbayar, ceremoniously laying the temple's foundation stone. In 2017, the temple was inaugurated by the Dalai Lama, showcasing the prowess of Mongolian architecture.

Laos Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.70479, 84.98522





Maha Bodhi Meditation Centre

Coordinates : 24.69912, 84.98129

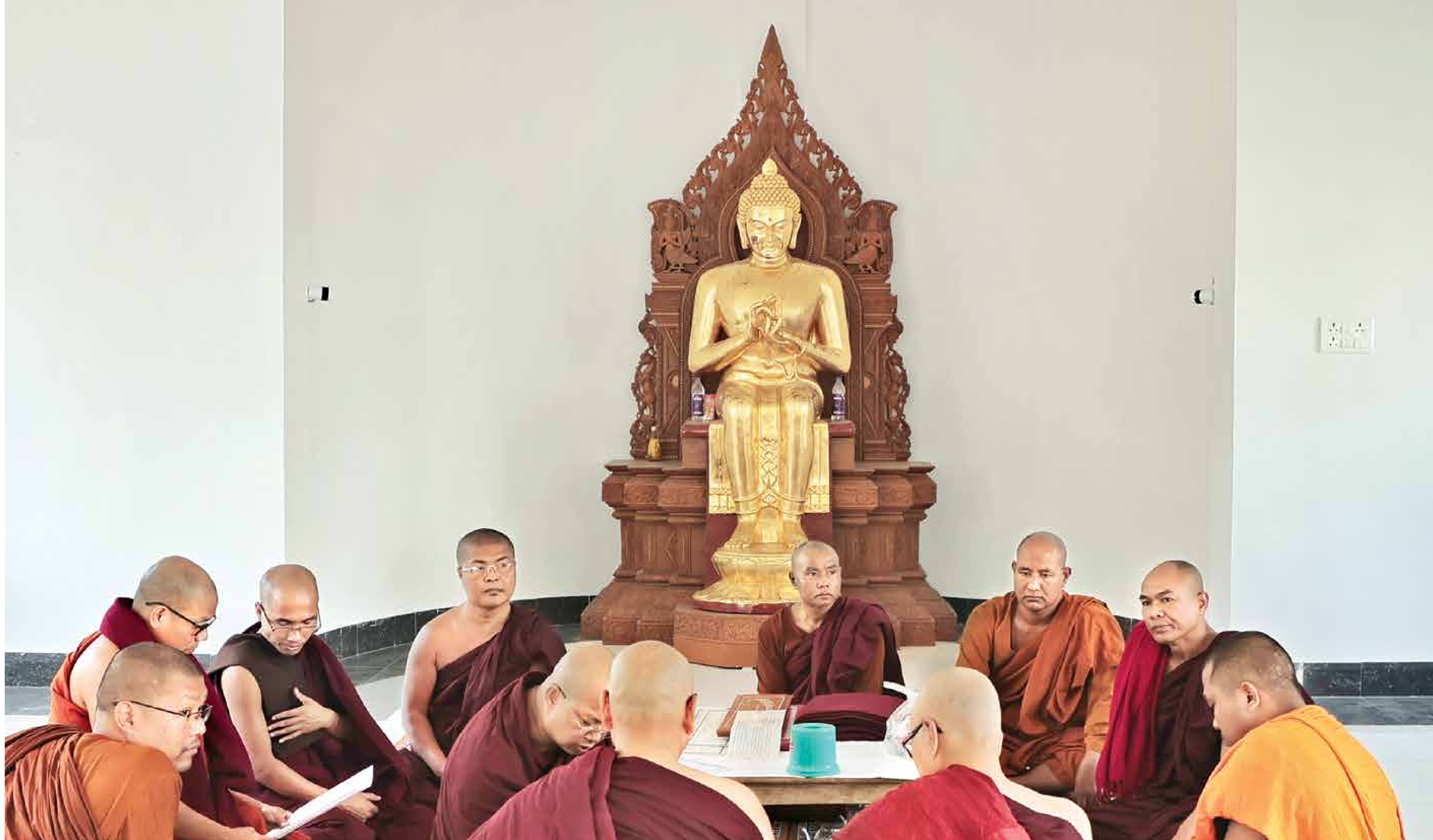
MAHABODHI MEDITATION CENTRE
NO PARKING

Maha Bodhi Parahita Myanmar Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.6891, 84.98119

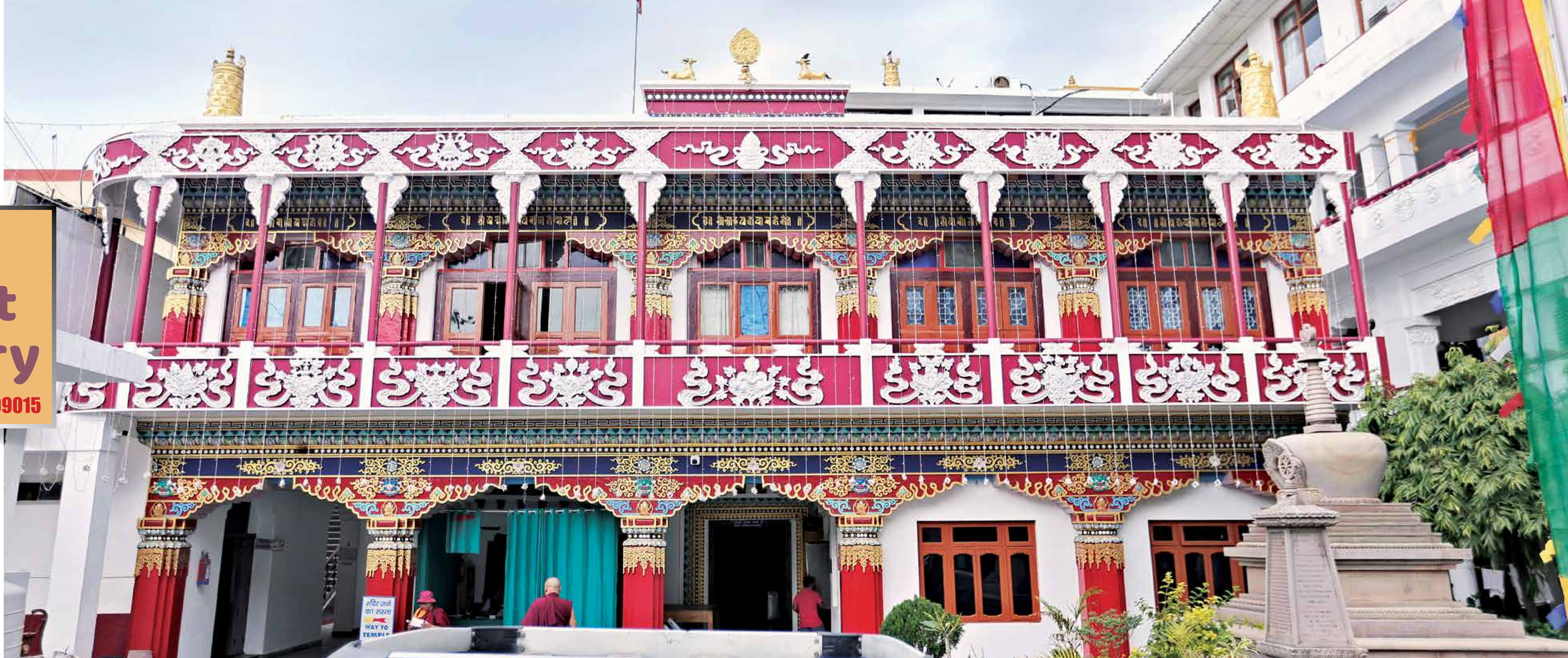
The Mahabodhi Parahita Myanmar Buddhist Monastery is located on Katoruwa Road, 1.9 km to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple. Although small in size, yet it is a peaceful abode, where the monks from Myanmar welcome and treat all visitors warmly.

Built by the Buddhist devotees of Myanmar (Burma) to honour Lord Buddha, the monastery is a serene space frequented by those who participate in the annual International Tripitaka Japa held here. Admission to the temple is free, and it welcomes visitors from sunrise to sunset. Within the monastery, there is a splendid golden statue of Lord Buddha seated on exquisitely carved wooden furniture. In this depiction, Buddha assumes the Dharma Chakra Mudra, symbolizing the "Wheel of Dharma" and representing a pivotal moment in Buddha's life—the delivery of his first sermon to his companions at Sarnath after attaining enlightenment.



Tibetan Buddhist Monastery

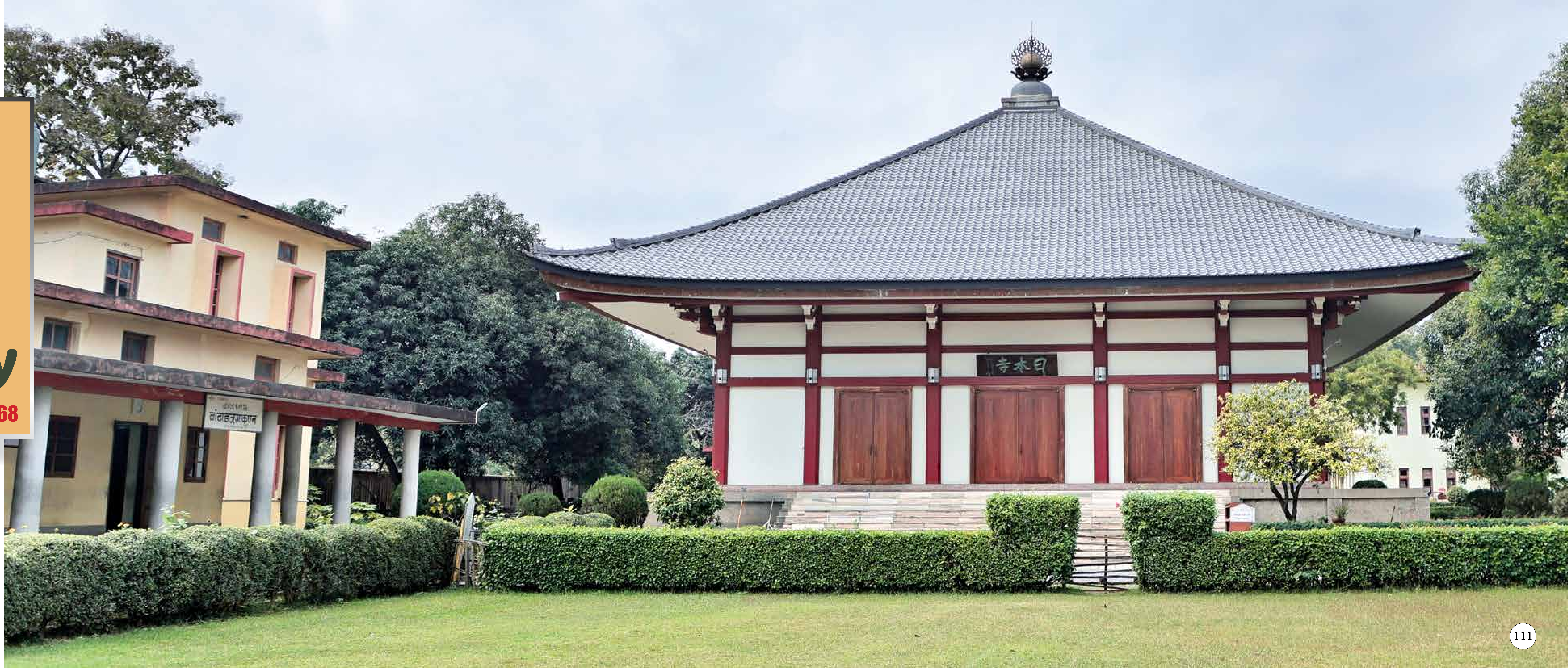
Coordinates : 24.69731, 84.99015

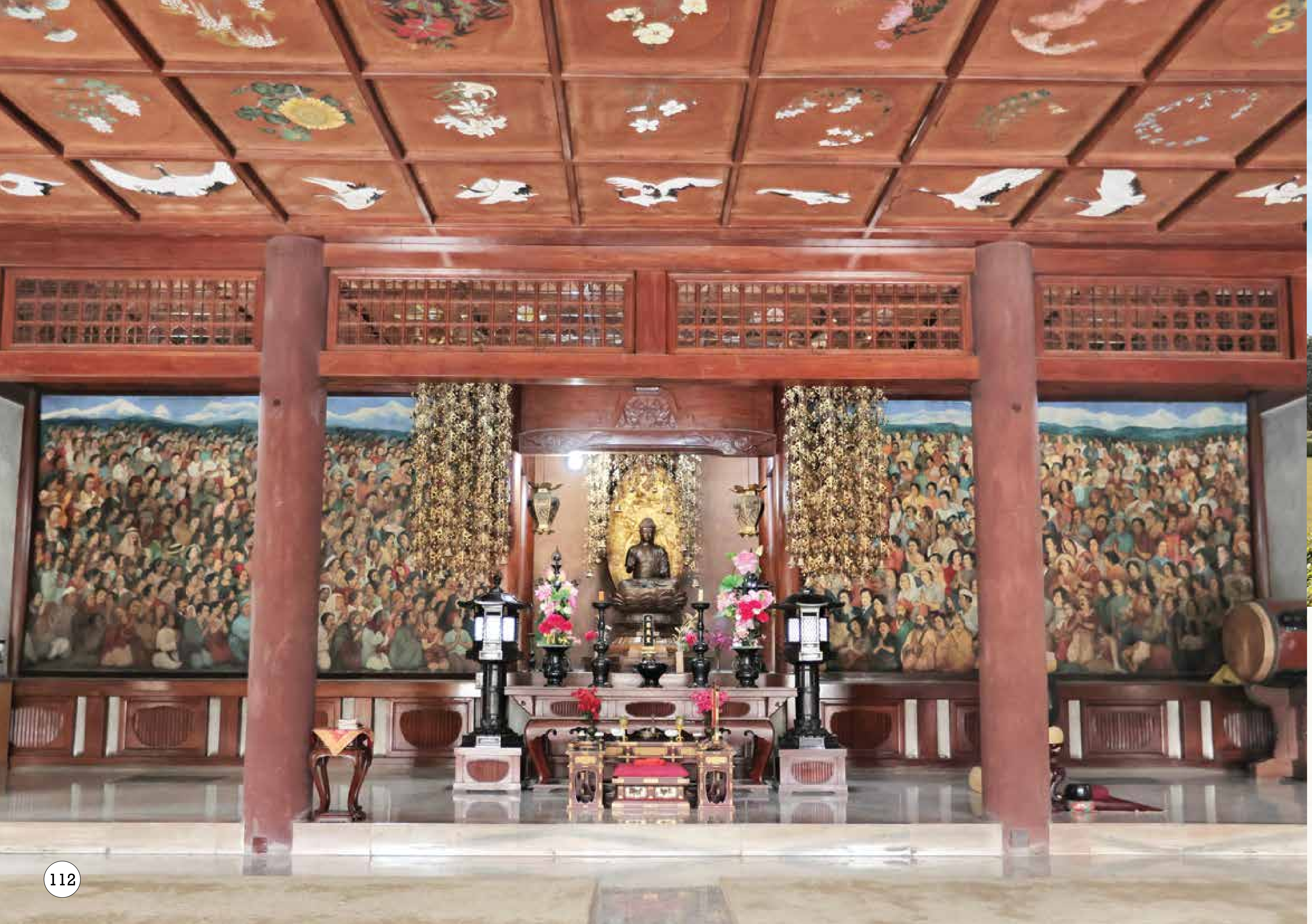

मंदिर जाने का रास्ता
WAY TO TEMPLE

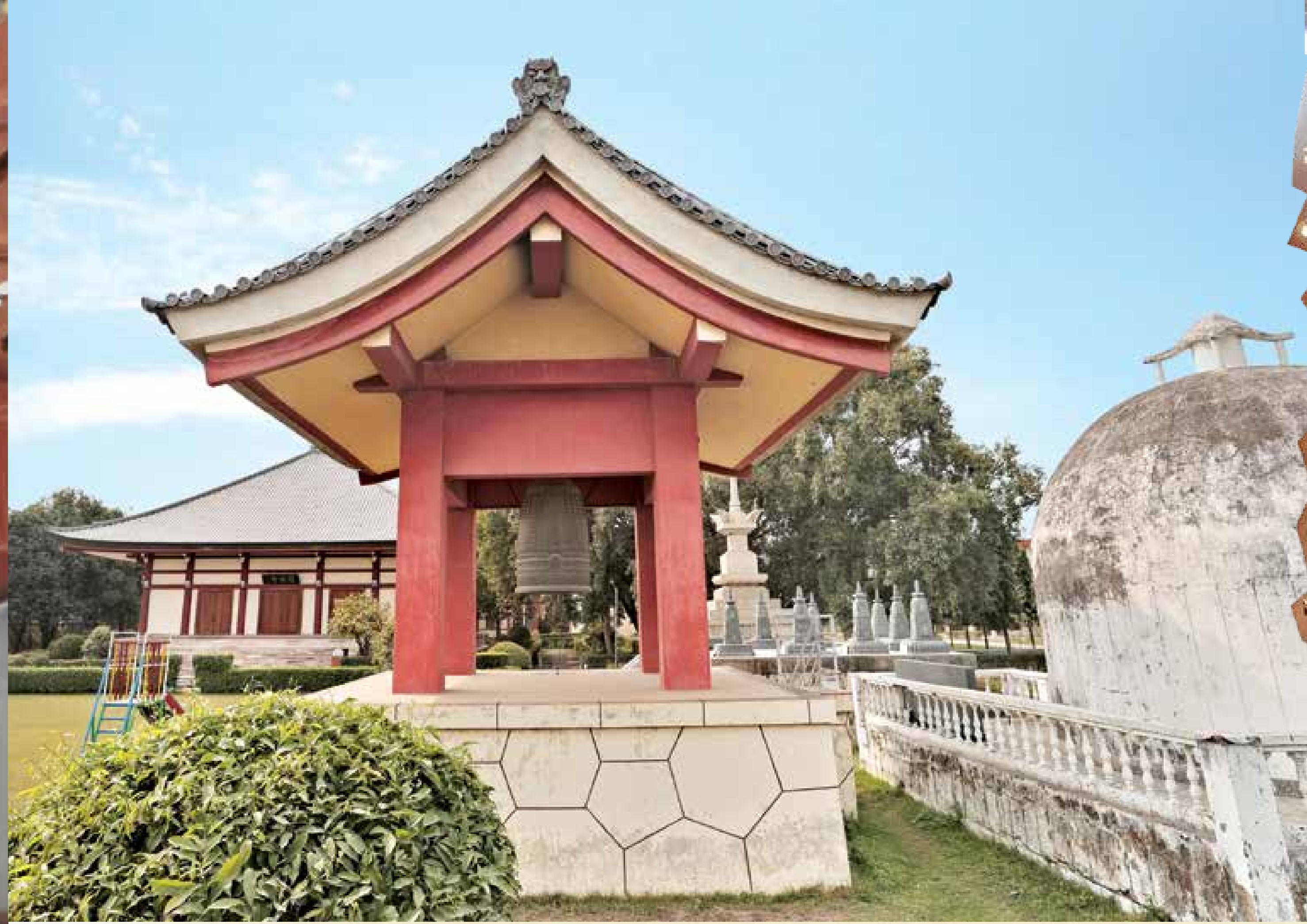
The Tibetan Buddhist Monastery is situated opposite to the Mahabodhi temple at a distance of about 140 meters. Every aspect of this monastery reflects the traditional art of Tibet exhibiting intricate craftsmanship. A 10 meter high Dharma Chakra or Dharma Wheel is placed within the monastery. It is believed that by spinning the wheels of this chakra thrice from left to right, people can liberate themselves from all their sins. Established in 1938, this monastery houses the statue of Maitreya Buddha.

Indosan Nippon Japanese Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69175, 84.98668







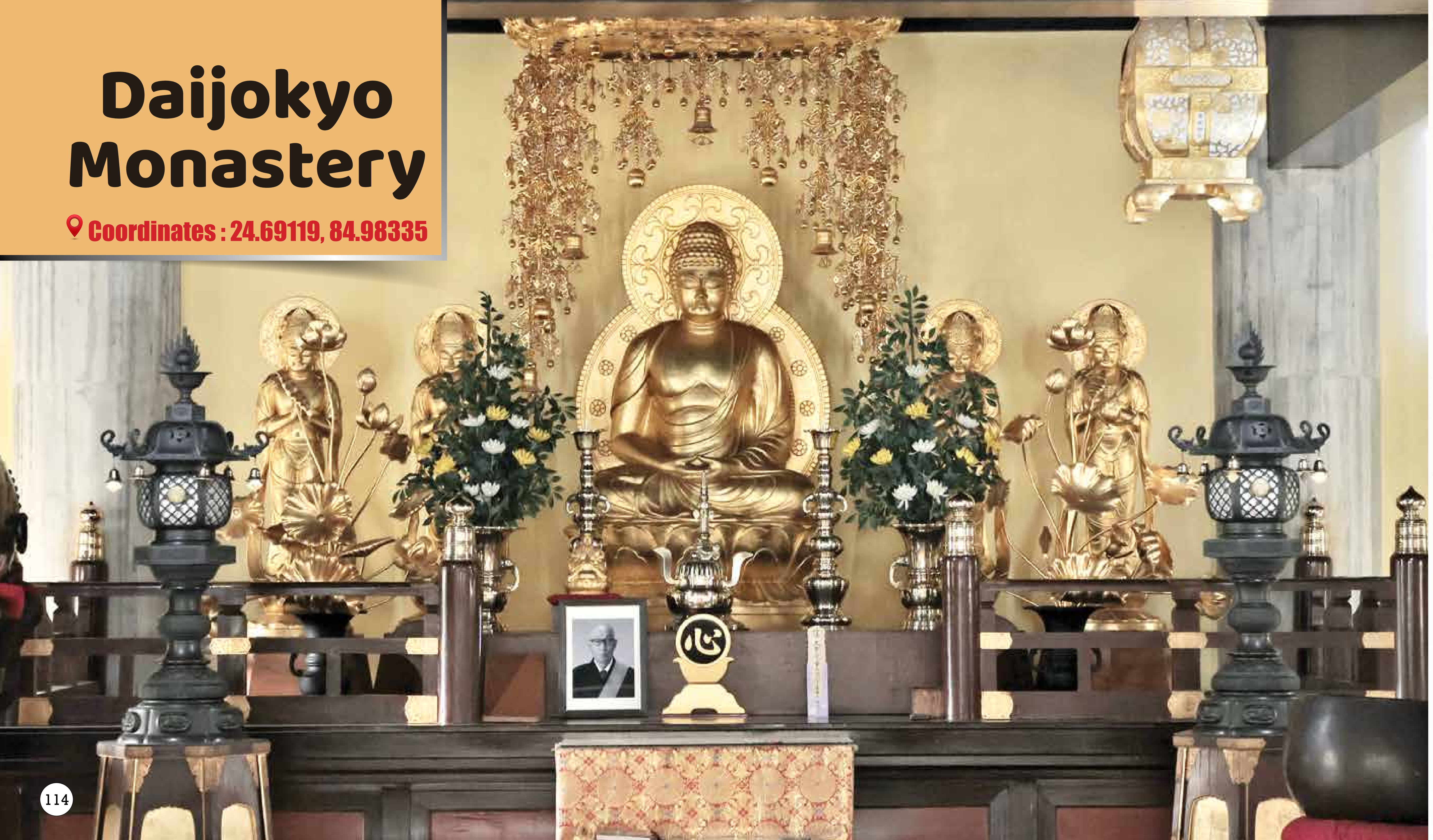
To the west of the Mahabodhi temple at a distance of 1.2 kilometre, is the Indosan Nippon Japanese Monastery. This monastery was constructed by the Kokusai Bukkyo Koryu Kyokai organization at the request of the then Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru. Mr Nehru had invited all Buddhist countries to come together at the sacred site of enlightenment of Buddha to give a message of peace and harmony to the entire world.

The temple's construction concluded in November 1973 and it was inaugurated by the then President of India V V Giri in December 1973.

This magnificent structure, inspired by Japanese woodcraft, has a large bell and a school for children within its courtyard.

Daijokyo Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69119, 84.98335

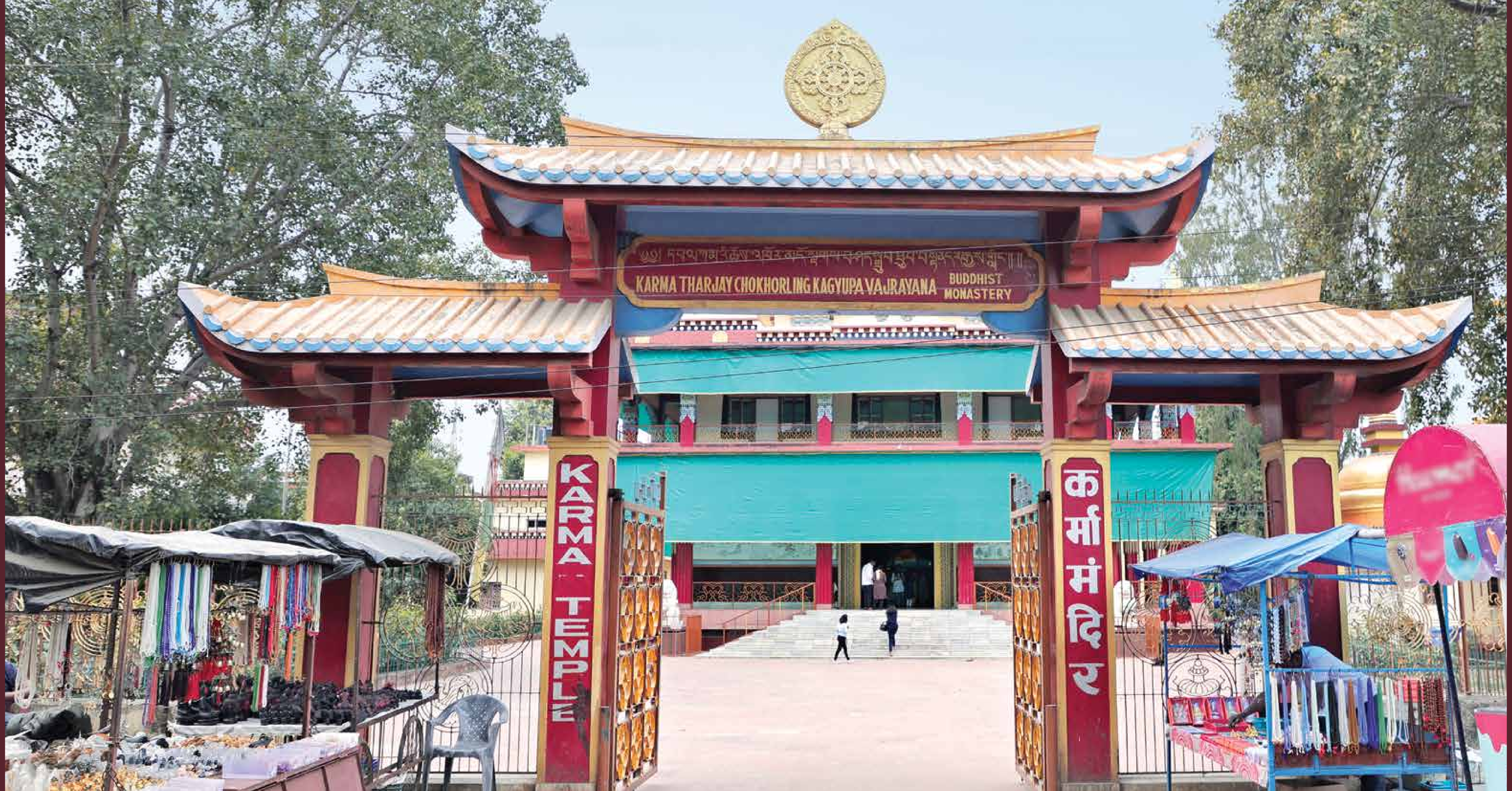


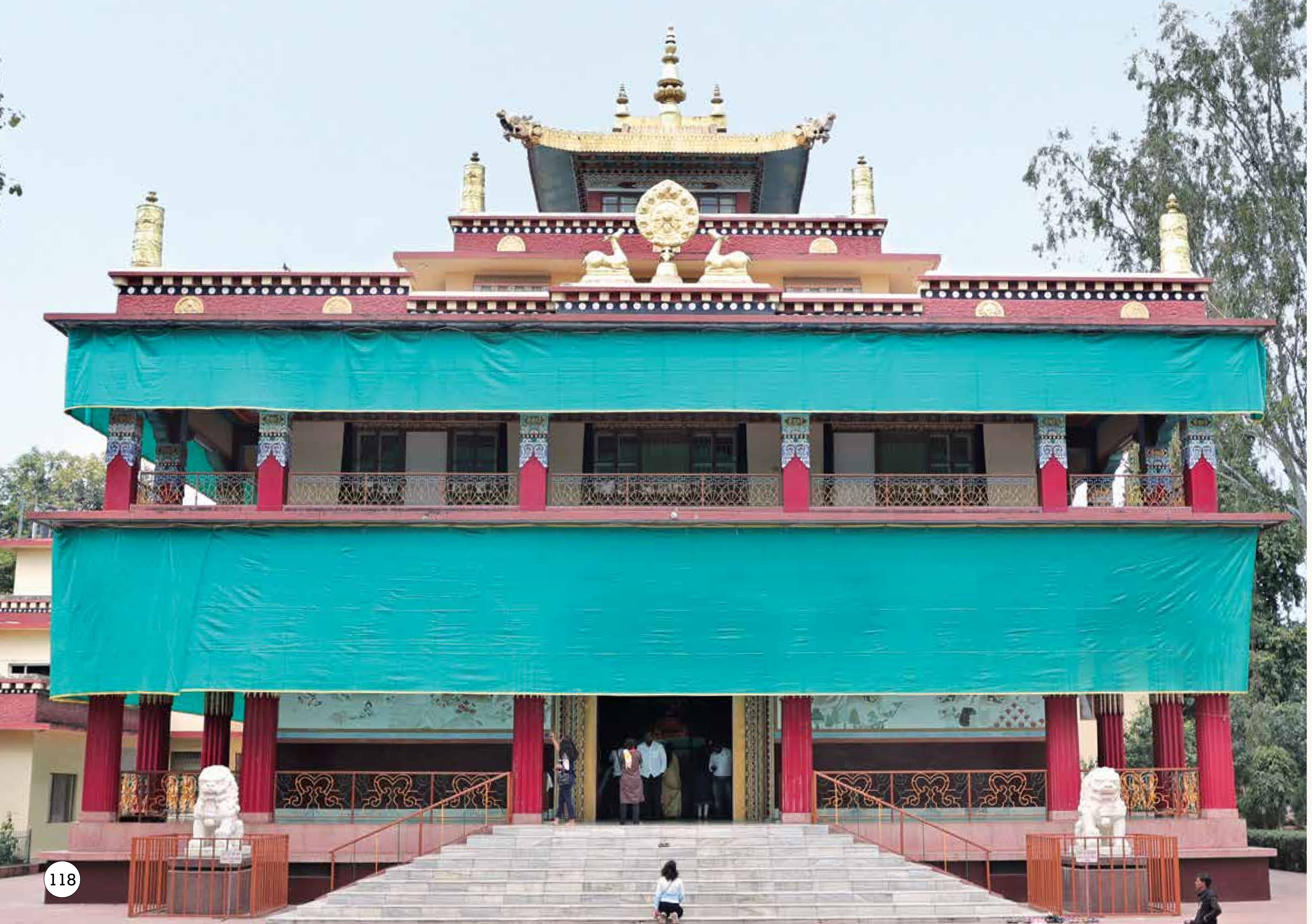
The Daijokyo Buddhist Monastery is located at a distance of mere 1.3 km towards the western side of the Mahabodhi Temple. Adjacent to the 80-foot Buddha statue, this monastery derives its name from the Japanese term "Daijokyo," meaning "huge vehicle." This term reflects its affiliation with the Mahayana sect of Buddhism, from which it draws its inspiration. Founded in Japan in 1914 by the esteemed monk Tasuko Sujiyama, the Daijokyo sect has established numerous branches across Japan, with followers dedicated to the teachings of Sadharma Pundarika sutra or the Lotus Sutra. His Holiness Y. Sujisaki served as the chief preacher and founding president of this sect. The establishment of the Daijokyo Buddhist Vihar in Bodh Gaya aims to advance and support the welfare activities and initiatives of the sect.

The Buddhist monastery is constructed on three acres of land provided by the Government of Bihar during the tenure of the Chief Minister, late Karpuri Thakur. Inaugurated on February 13, 1983, by the then President of India, Giani Zail Singh, structure of the monastery comprises a two-story concrete building, on which a three-story Japanese-style Pagoda (stupa) has been built. Within the monastery, a splendid bronze statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in a meditative posture, brought from Japan, is enshrined, further highlighting the sect's reverence for Buddhist ideals.

Karmapa Tibetan Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69153, 84.98360

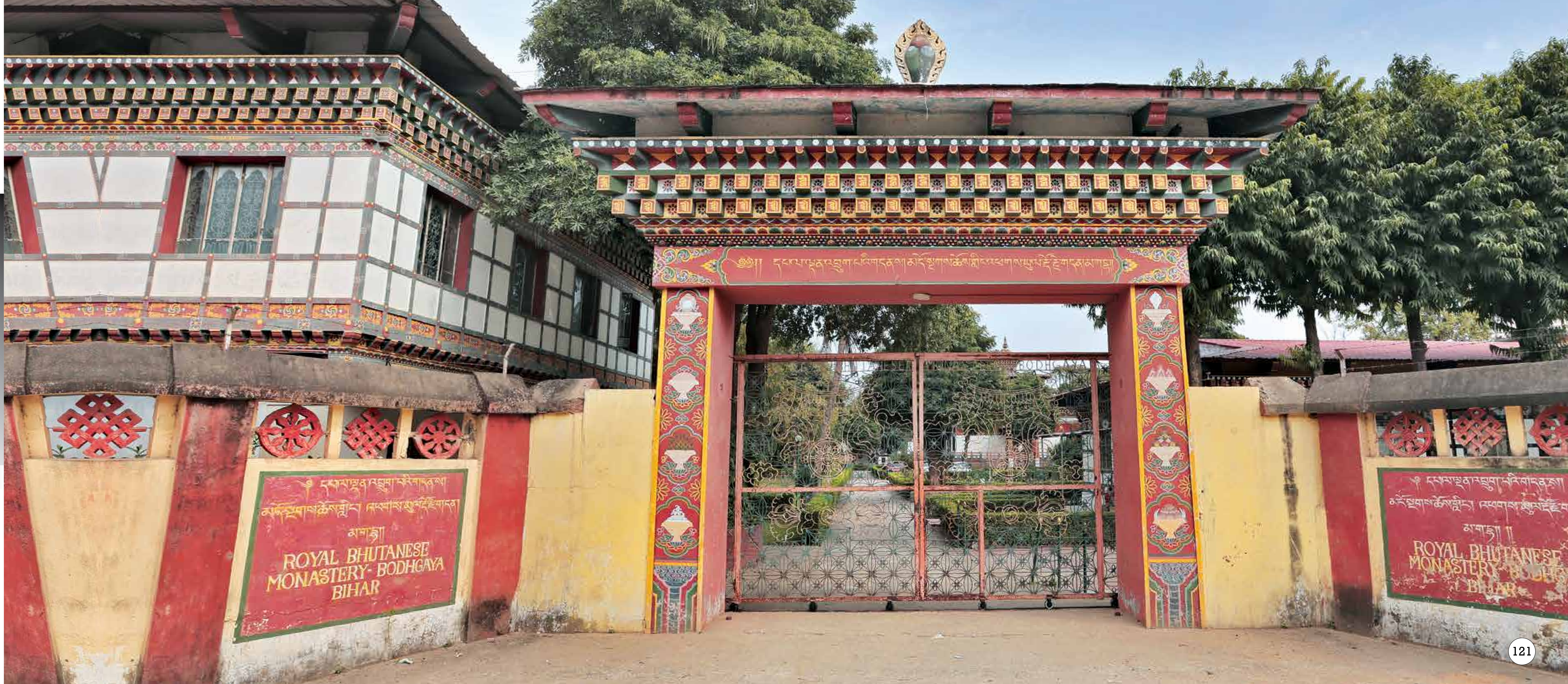

KARMA THARJAY CHOKHORLING KAGYUPA VAJRAYANA BUDDHIST MONASTERY
KARMA TEMPLE
कर्मा मंदिर



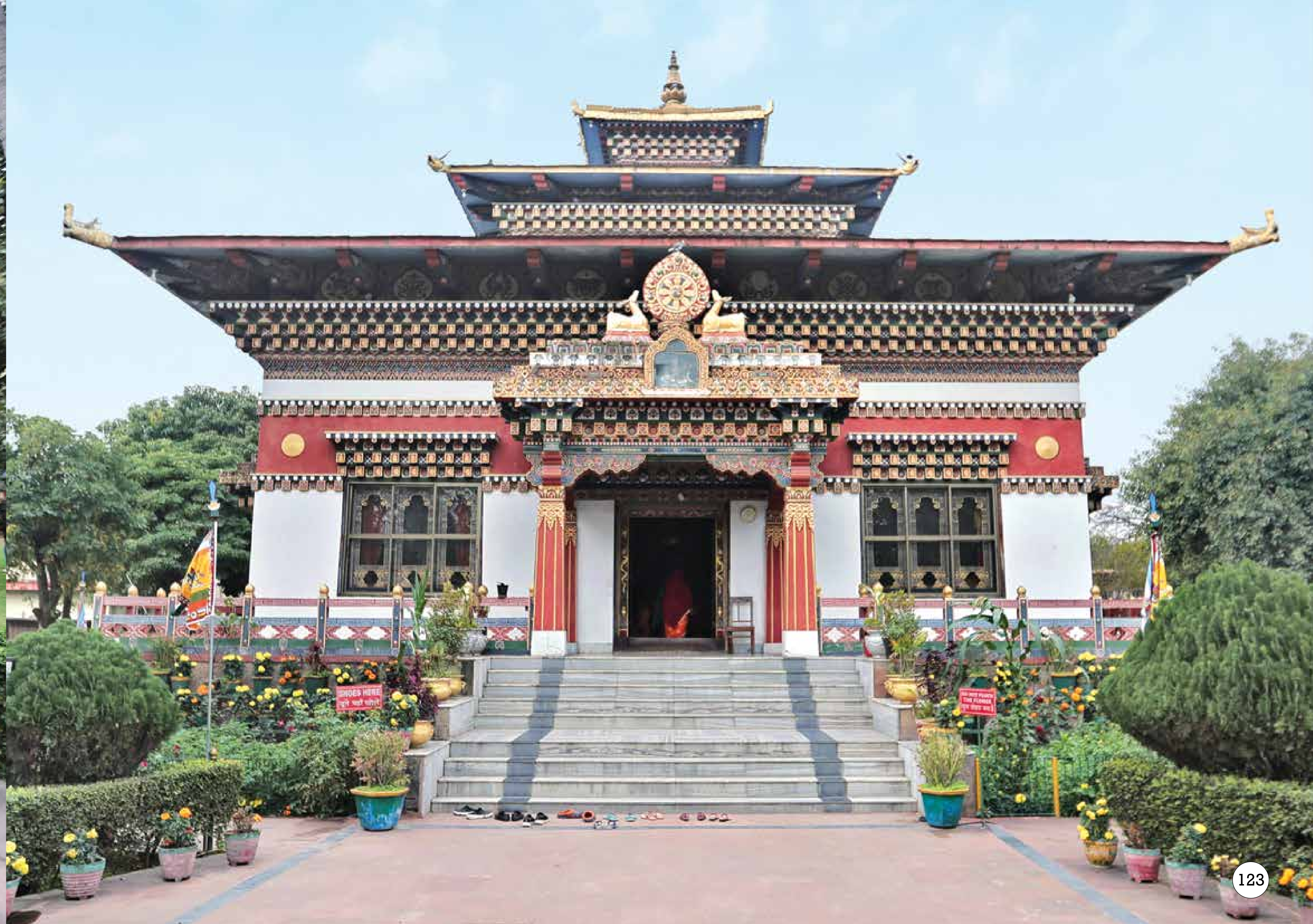
The Karmapa Tibetan Buddhist Monastery is situated adjacent to the Daijokyo Buddhist Monastery. This monastery is affiliated with the Kagyupa Vajrayana sect of Tibet that was established in 1938. It is alternatively referred to as the Kagyupa Vajrayana Monastery, Karma Buddhist Monastery, or Mahayana Tibetan Buddhist Monastery. Exquisite Tibetan paintings add a wonderful charm to the monastery. The intricate artwork within this monastery is inspired from the Mulagandha Cottage in Sarnath, contributing to the monastery's visual magnificence and spiritual ambience. This monastery also has a gompa.

Royal Bhutanese Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69256, 84.98526

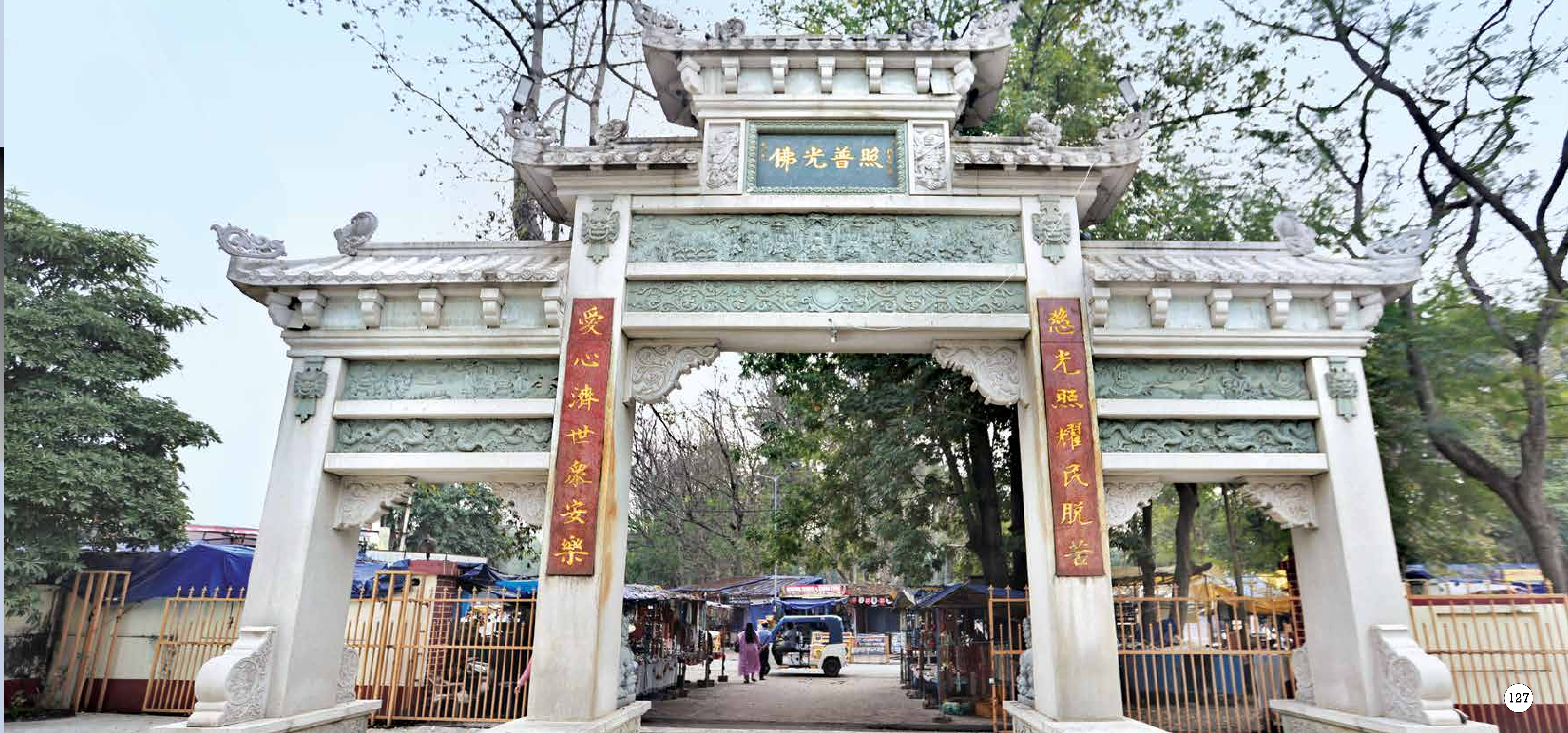

ROYAL BHUTANESE
MONASTERY- BODHGAYA
BIHAR
ROYAL BHUTANESE
MONASTERY- BODHGAYA
BIHAR

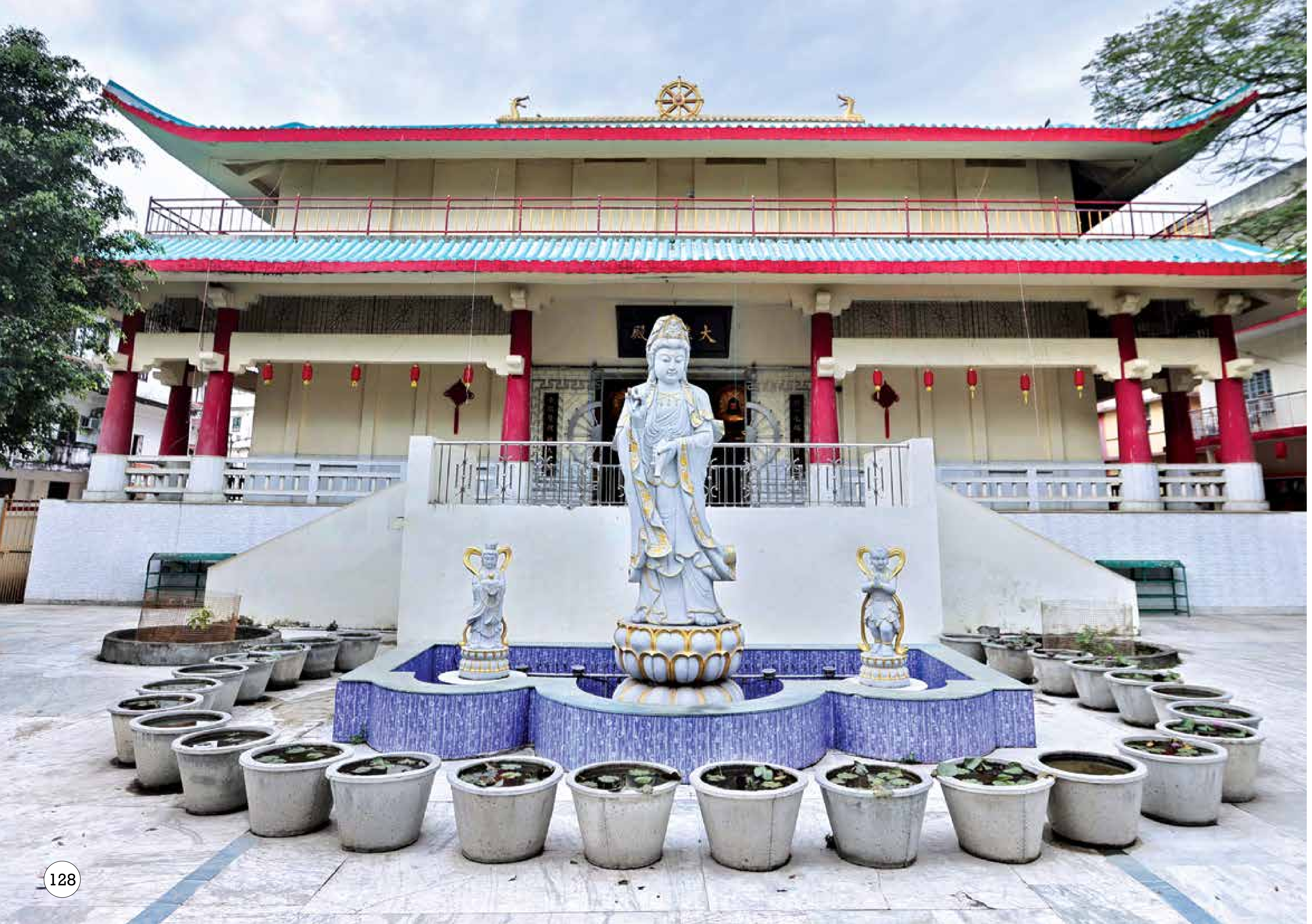
The Royal Bhutanese Monastery lies just 1 km to the west of the Mahabodhi Temple, near the Indosan Nippon Buddhist Monastery. Its foundation stone was laid on October 28, 1983, by the King of Bhutan in honour of Lord Buddha. Followers in Bhutan embrace Mahayana Buddhism, specifically the Dokya Karnyu Sect, a branch closely associated with Tibetan Buddhism. The artistic influence of Tibet is evident in the monastery's design. It is symbolic of Bhutan's spiritual and cultural legacy, reflecting the kingdom's grandeur. Despite its modest size, the monastery has a distinctive identity that sets it apart.

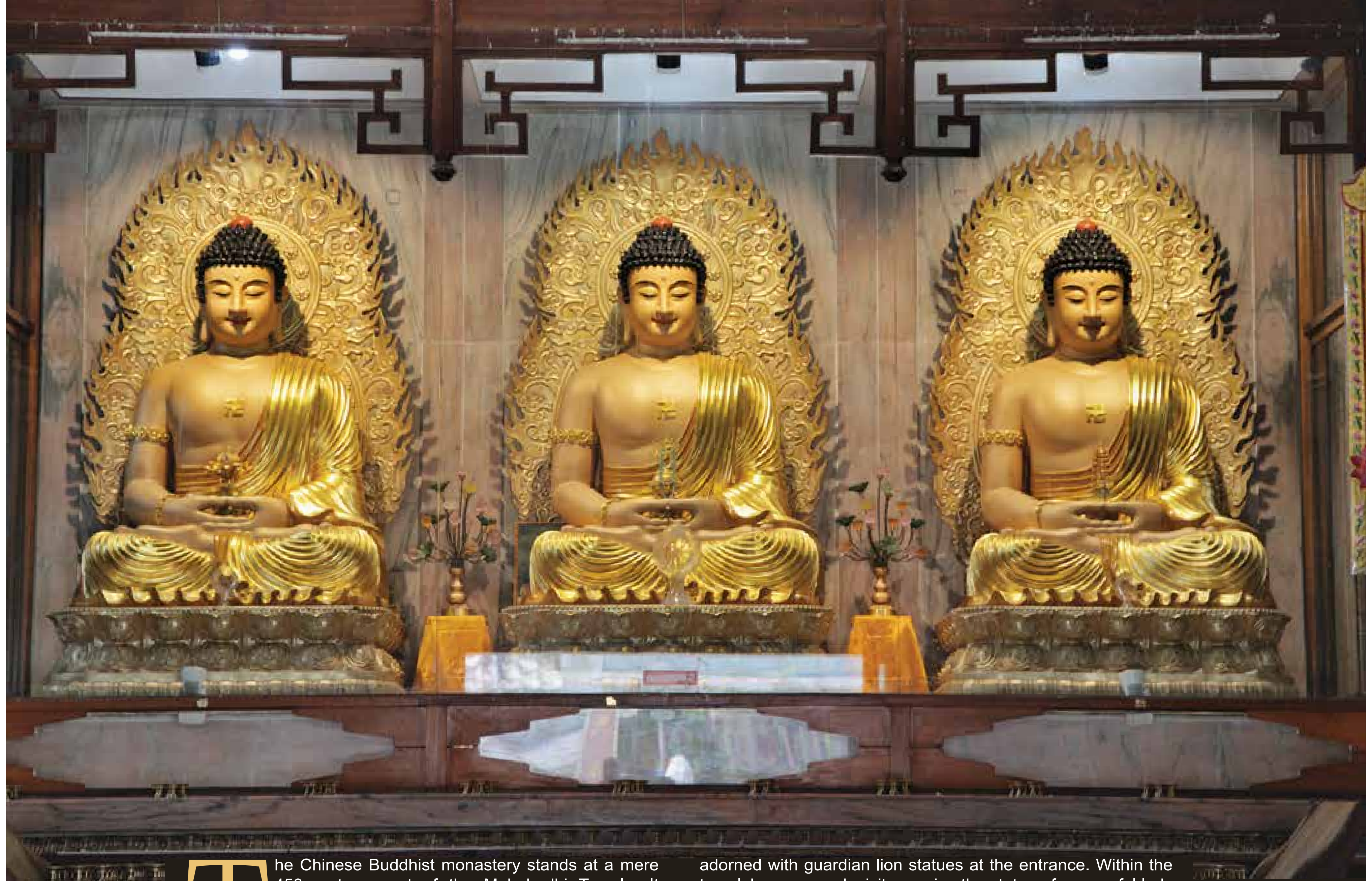


Mahabodhi Chinese Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69641, 84.98806


佛光普照
愛心濟世眾安樂
慈光照耀民脫苦



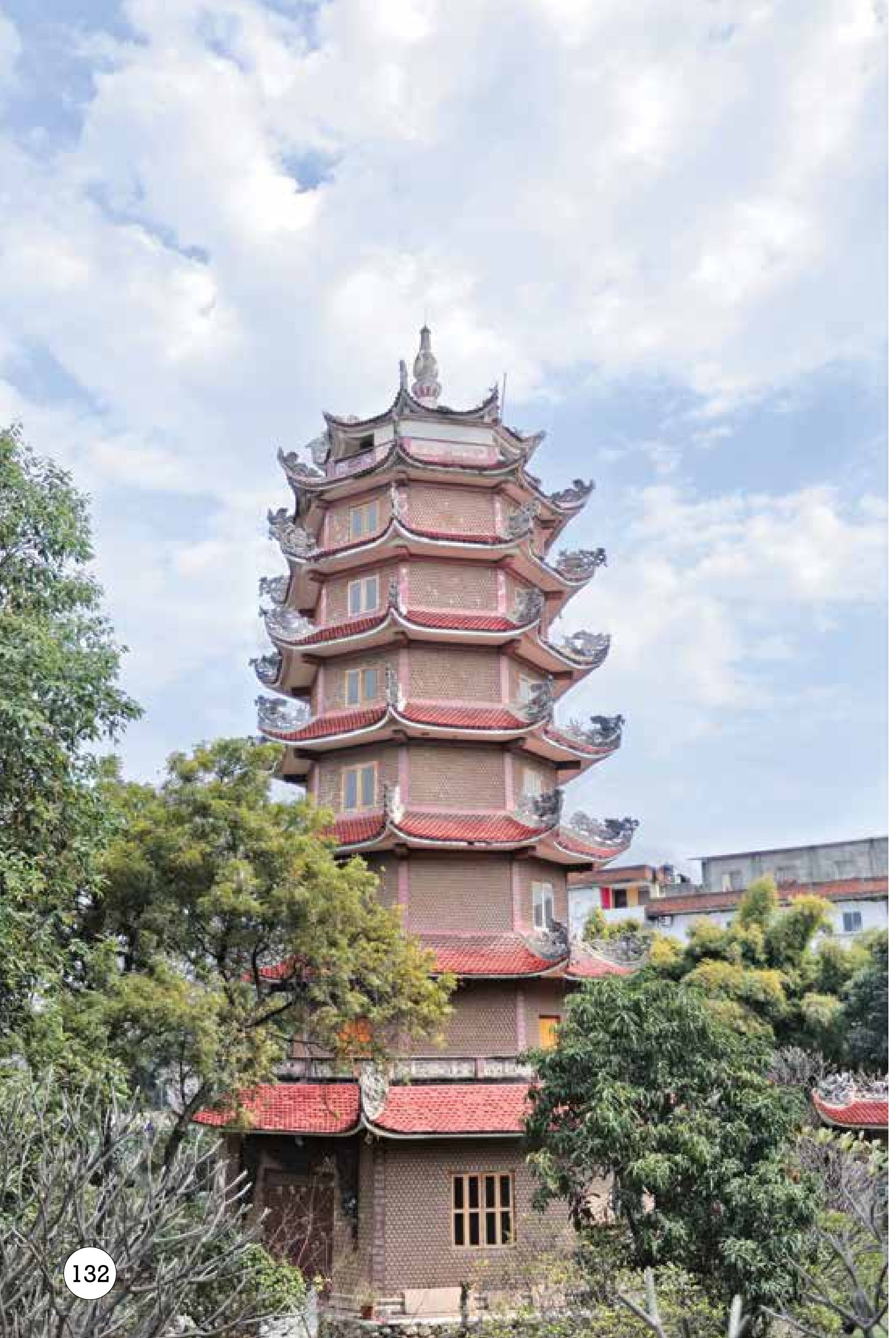


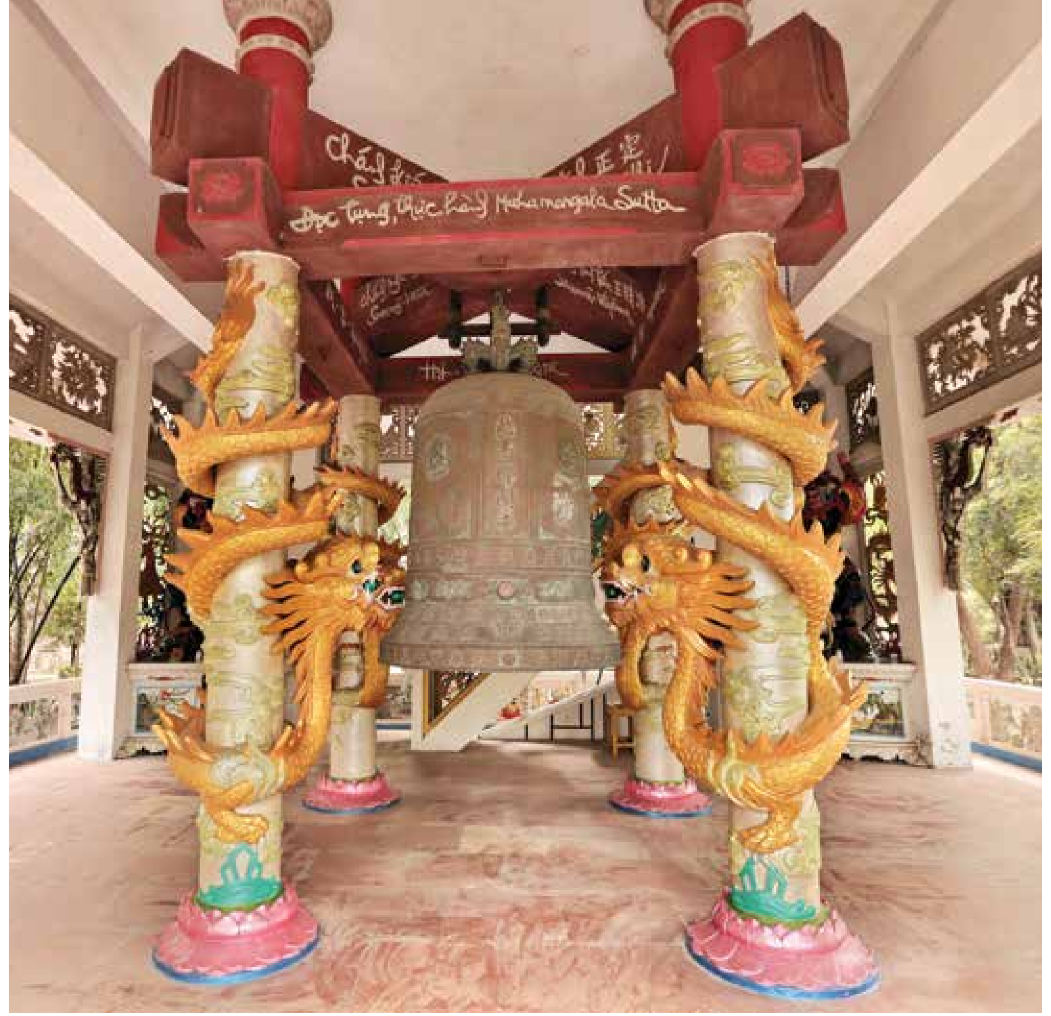
The Chinese Buddhist monastery stands at a mere 450 meters west of the Mahabodhi Temple. It was constructed in 1945, through the efforts of the renowned Chinese monk 'Sih-Tih-Chen'. The monastery's architectural style draws inspiration from Chinese Buddhist monasteries, featuring a grand gate adorned with guardian lion statues at the entrance. Within the temple's compound, visitors enjoy the statue of a graceful lady holding a lotus, along with the sculpture of Ananda, a beloved disciple of Buddha. Once the compound is crossed, the main temple is seen which is built on an elevated platform. It houses three golden statues of Lord Buddha.

Vietnam Buddhist Monastery Land

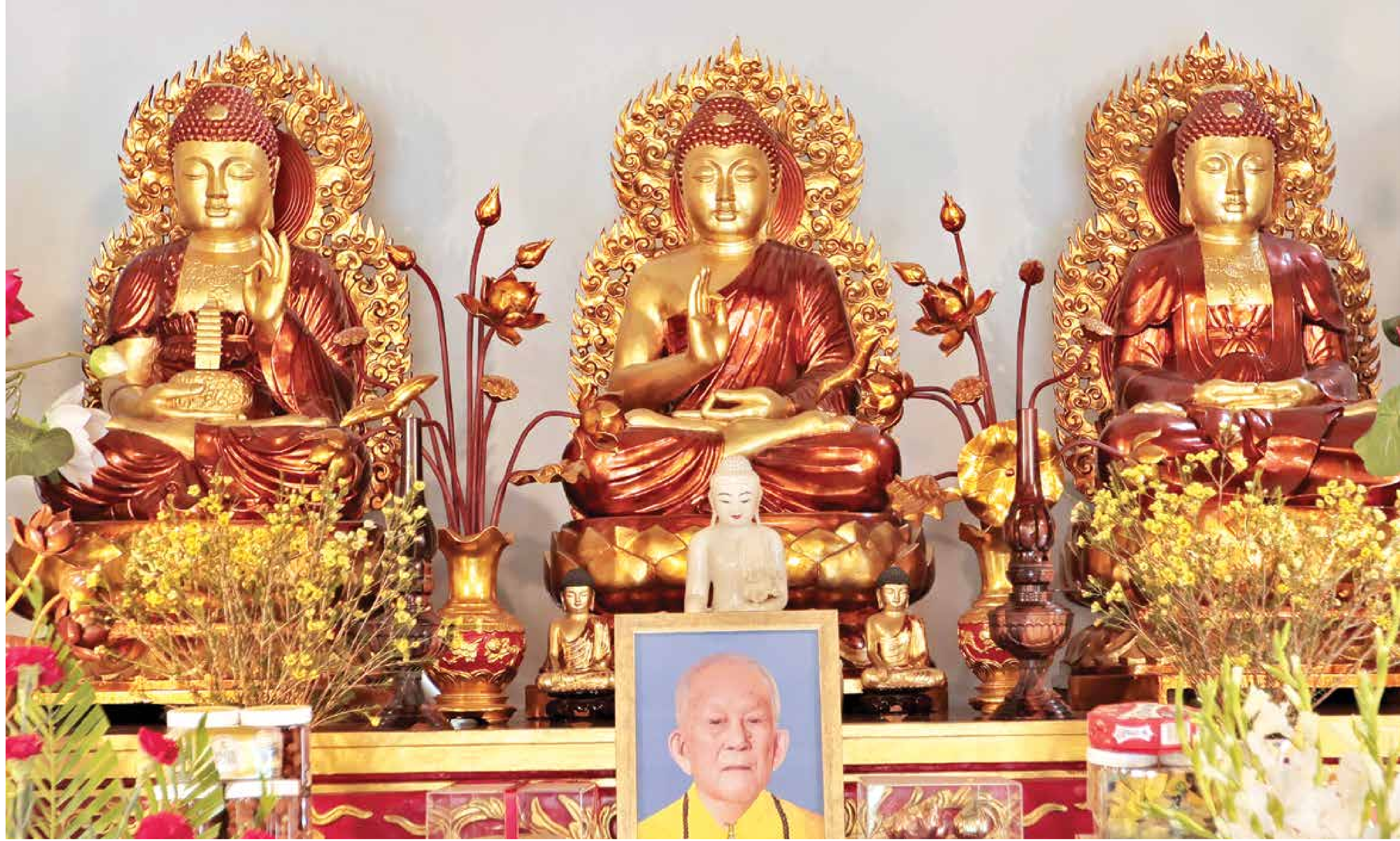
Coordinates : 24.70114, 84.98233

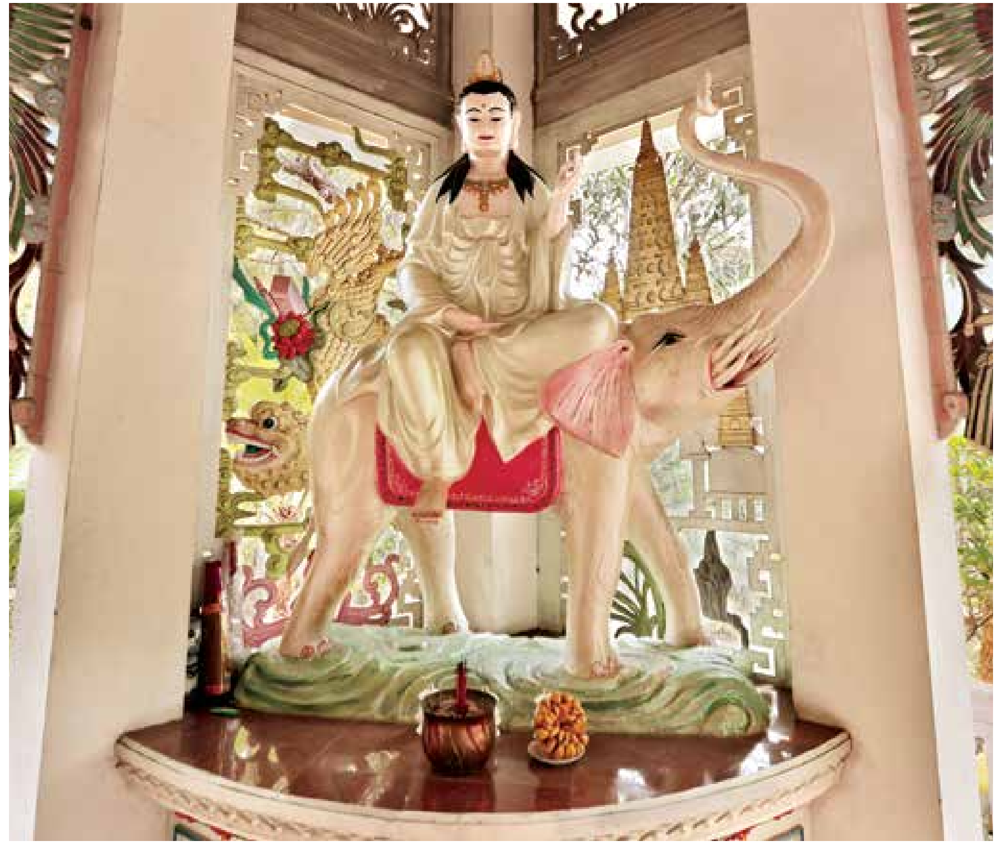
TỪ BI
METTA
KARUNA
HỶ XẢ
MUDITA
UPEKKHA

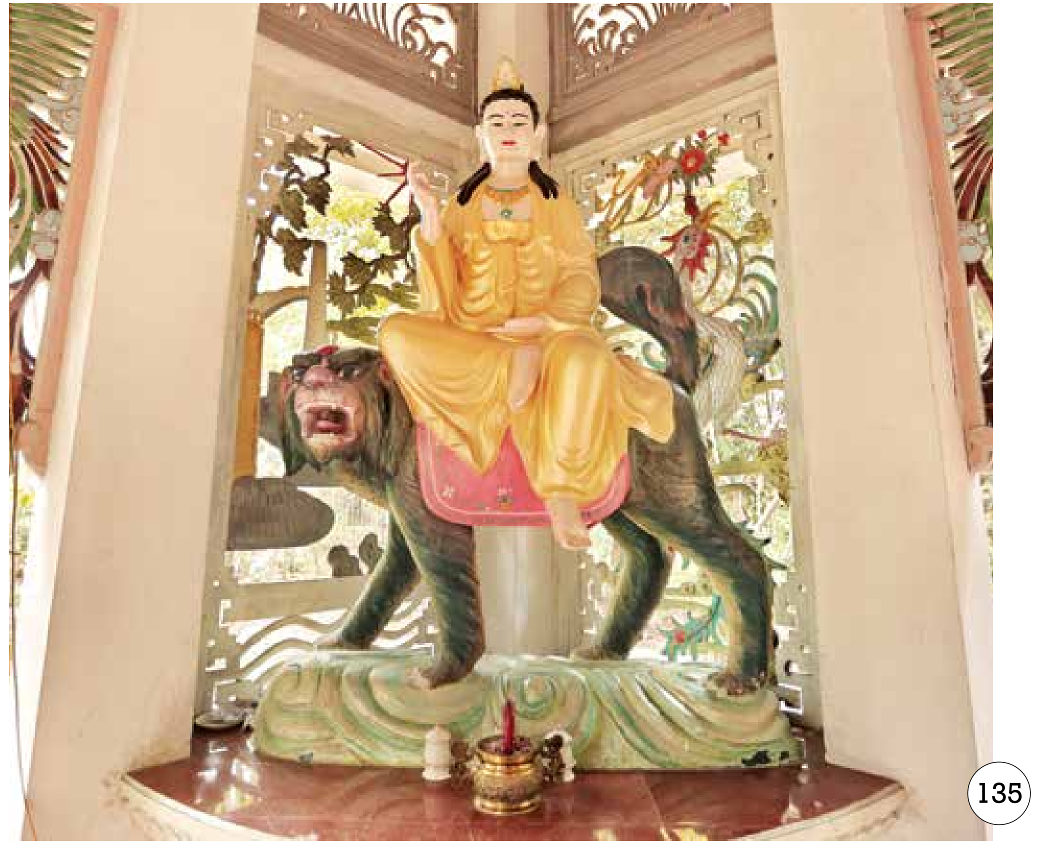




The Vietnam Buddhist Monastery Land (Bhoomi) is situated on Namita Road in Bhagalpur, Belsar, just 2.1 km northwest of the Mahabodhi Temple. This exquisite monastery stands as a symbol of great friendship between Vietnam and India. The construction of this monastery is credited to the esteemed Vietnamese monk Thay Huyen Dieu. Upon entering this monastery, one's gaze is drawn to the majestic 8-storey pagoda, reminiscent of Vietnam's architectural style. It is designed to foster a serene environment conducive to meditation. The monastery serves as an epitome of culture of the country, showcasing Vietnam's heritage through intricate craftsmanship and detailing. Within the main temple, three statues of Lord Buddha are enshrined, emanating tranquility and peace. The open area outside the main temple is adorned by a beautiful bell, adding to the soulful ambience. There are provisions for the residence of Buddhist monks, making it a complete abode for spiritual quest.

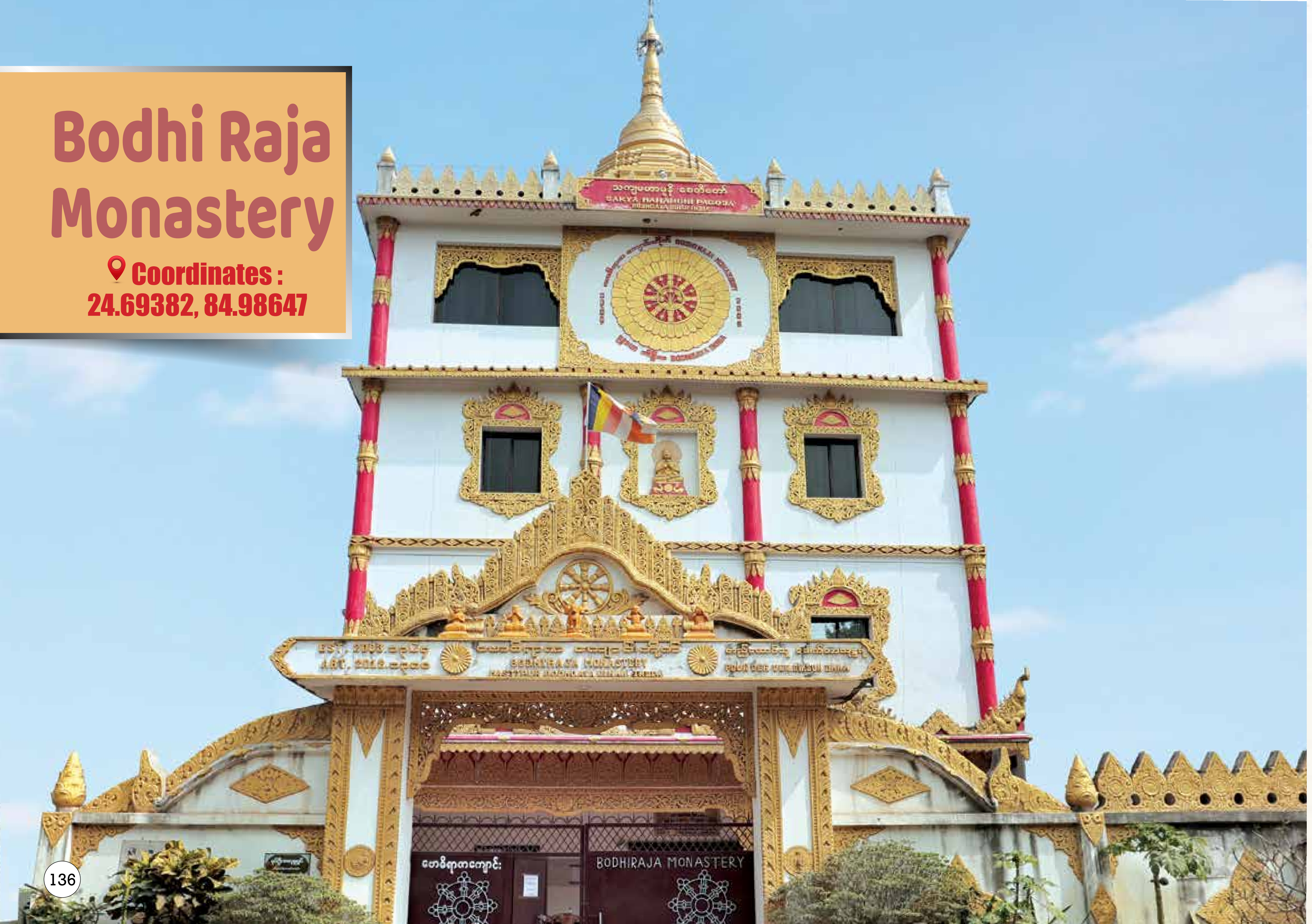






Bodhi Raja Monastery

Coordinates :
24.69382, 84.98647


BODHIRAJA MONASTERY

Buddha Gaya Bana Vihar

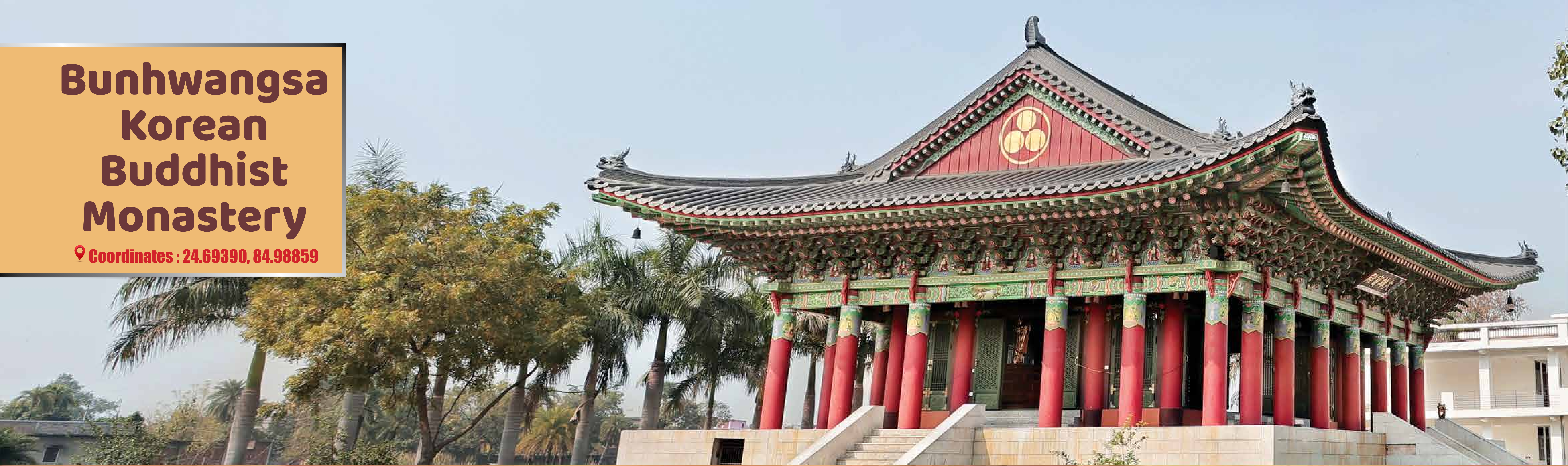
Coordinates : 24.68598, 84.97700

ESTD : 2002
BUDDHA GAYA BANA VIHAR

The Bana Vihar (Forest Monastery) is situated approximately 2.2 km southwest of the Mahabodhi Temple, representing Bangladesh's presence in the complex. In 2007, Nandpal Mahathera Bhante ji, following a visit to Bodh Gaya and observing the state of the sacred site, founded the Bodh Gaya Forest Monastery with the aim of revitalizing Buddhism in India. The Monastery serves as a vital hub, catering particularly to the multitude of pilgrims travelling to Bodh Gaya from both India and overseas, assisting them in their spiritual endeavours. Moreover, it organizes a variety of spiritual and educational programs throughout the year, creating awareness about Buddhism and dissemination of Buddhist teachings.

Bunhwangsa Korean Buddhist Monastery

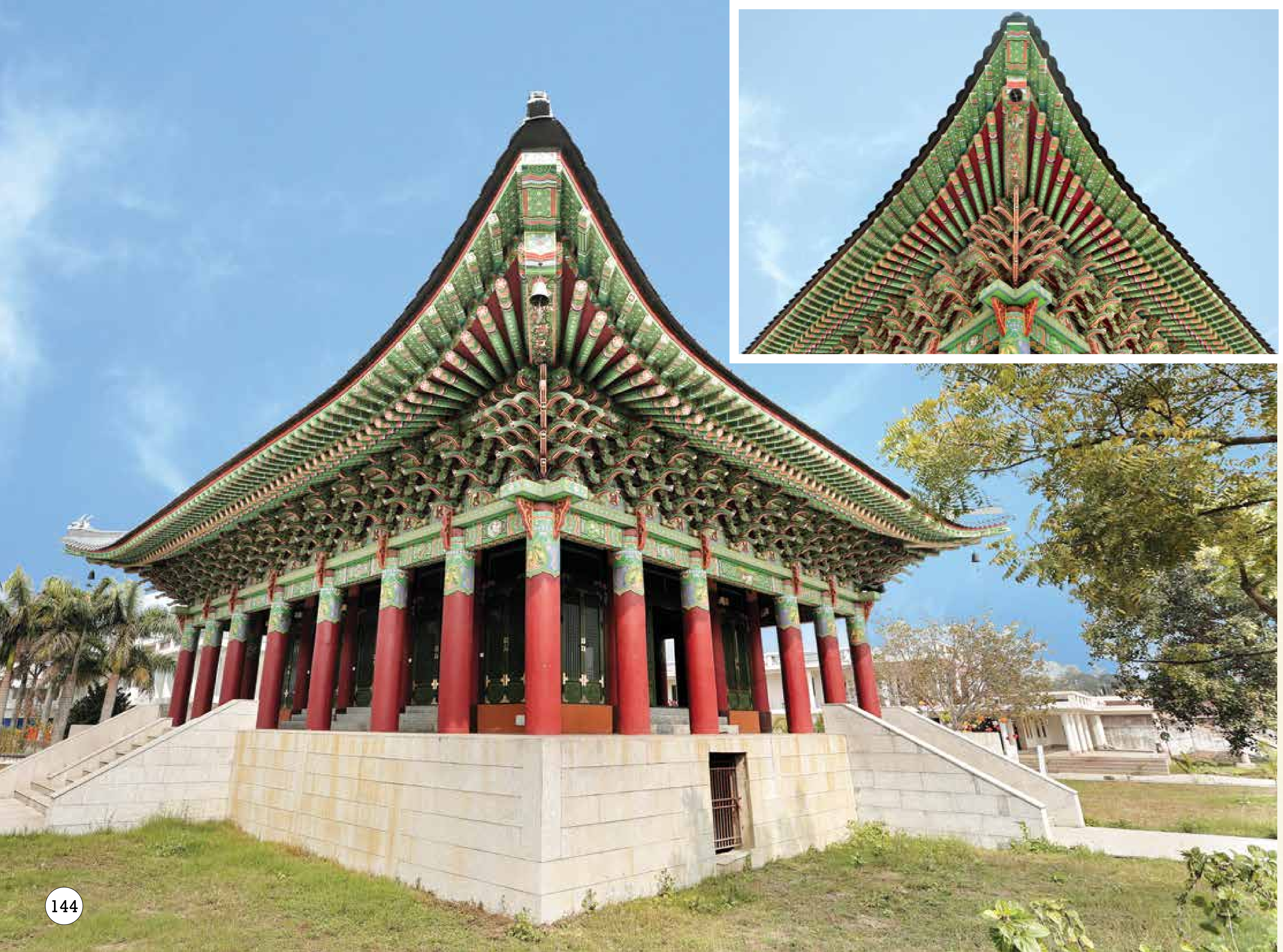
Coordinates : 24.69390, 84.98859

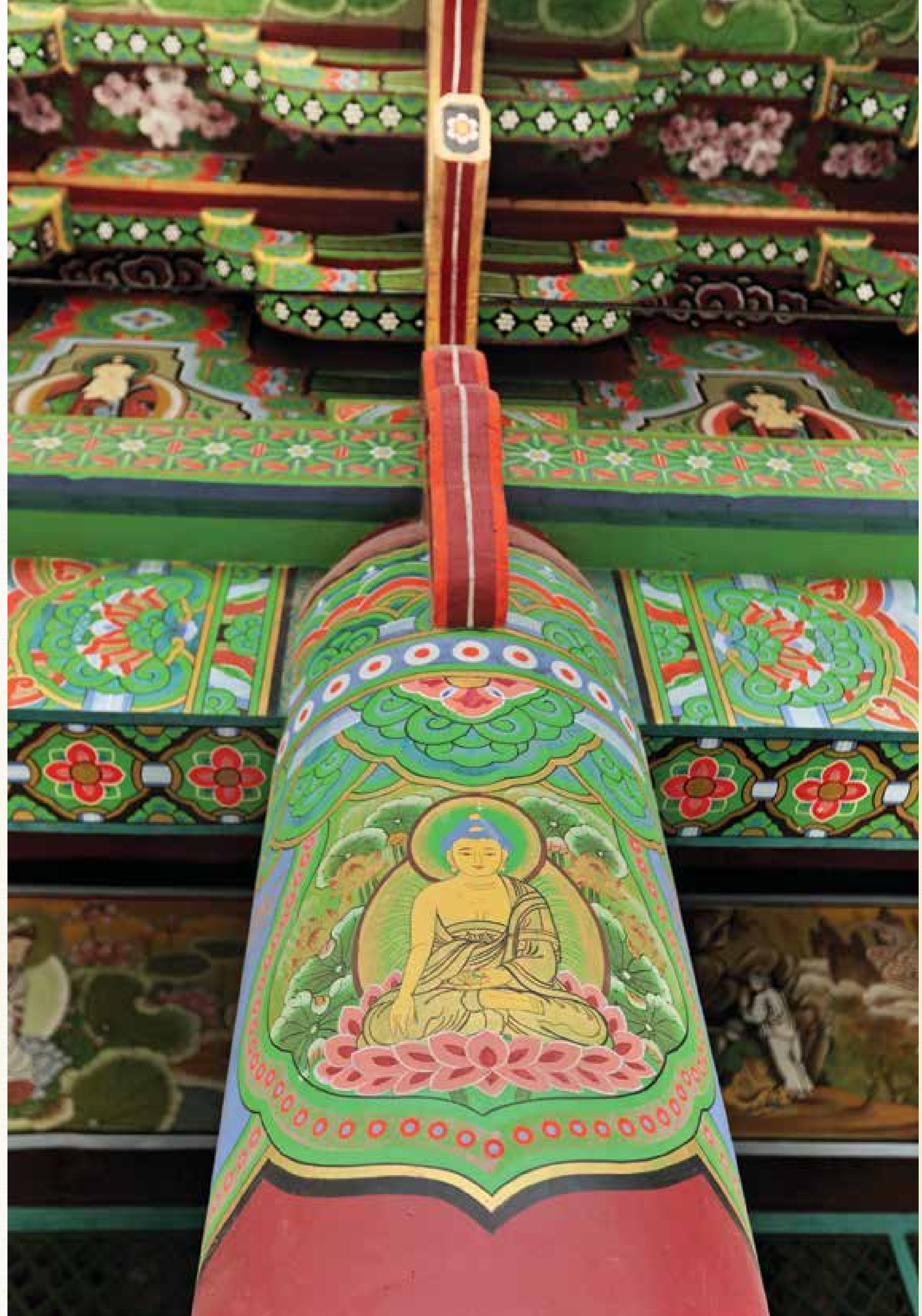


The Bunhwangsa Korean Buddhist Monastery is situated to the southwest of the Mahabodhi Temple. The name "Bunhwang" in Korean refers to a lovely lotus flower that remains pure despite growing in muddy water.

Construction of the Korean-style temple in Bodh Gaya commenced in 2019 when Salmai and Yeonchui, two female Buddhists, donated 5 billion won for the project. This was followed by a donation of 6,600 square meters of land worth 3 billion won in Bodh Gaya by members of Tongdosa, one of the three largest Buddhist temples in Korea. Completed in 2022, the Korean monastery is a collaborative effort of Korean architects and local craftsmen.

The temple is designed based on the traditional Korean architecture of Hanok. This traditional architecture was patronized by the Korean dynasties. Hanok became most





popular during the Chosun Dynasty. The temple features a main pagoda and has three statues within an airy room. It was designed and built by Korean architect Hyangsan Park and several Korean woodcraftsmen, considering the local conditions in Bodh Gaya.

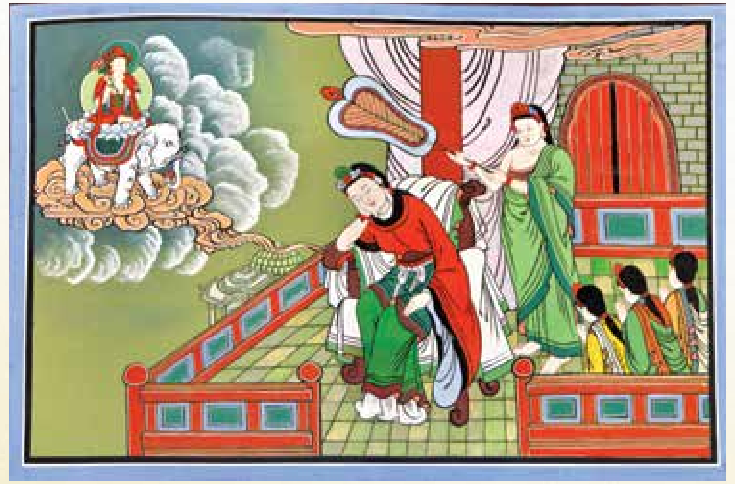
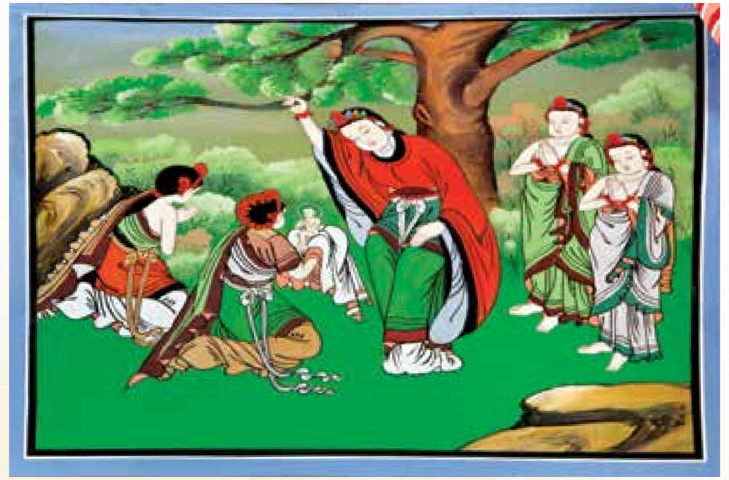
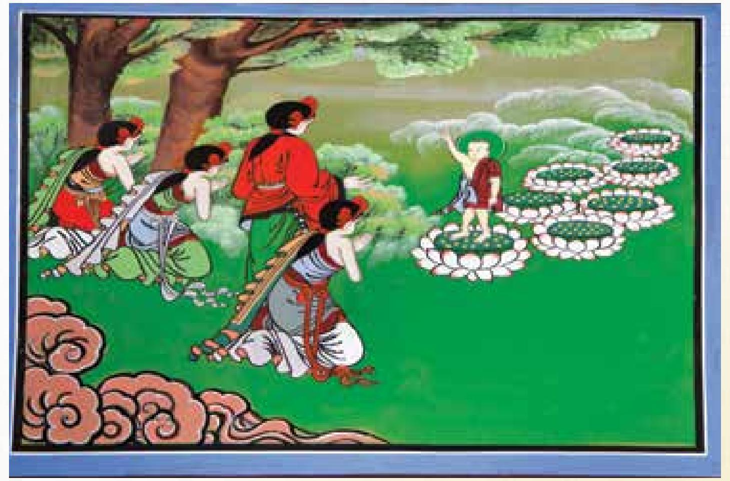
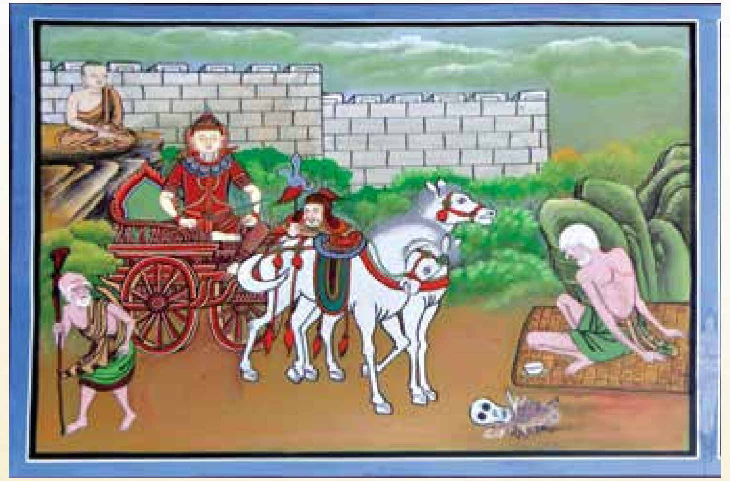
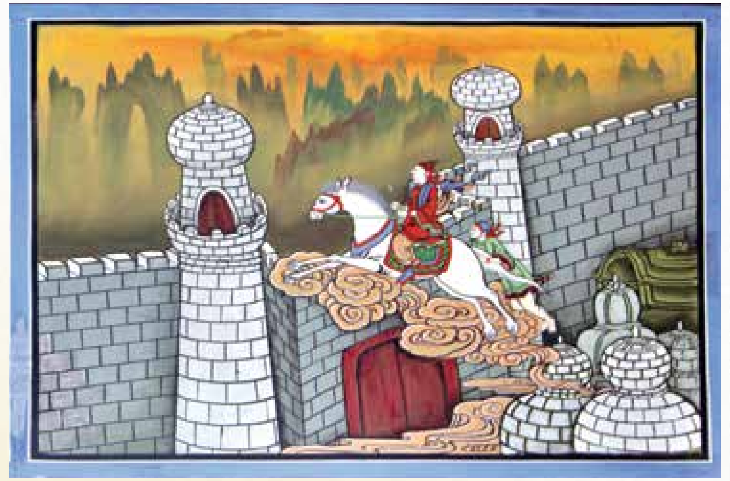
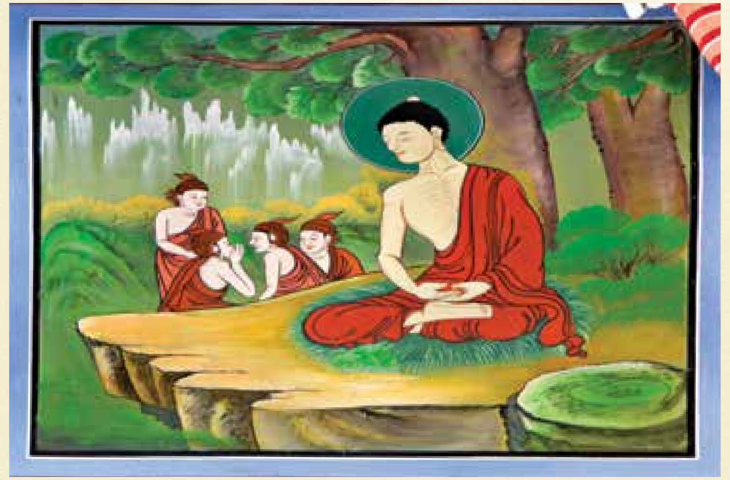
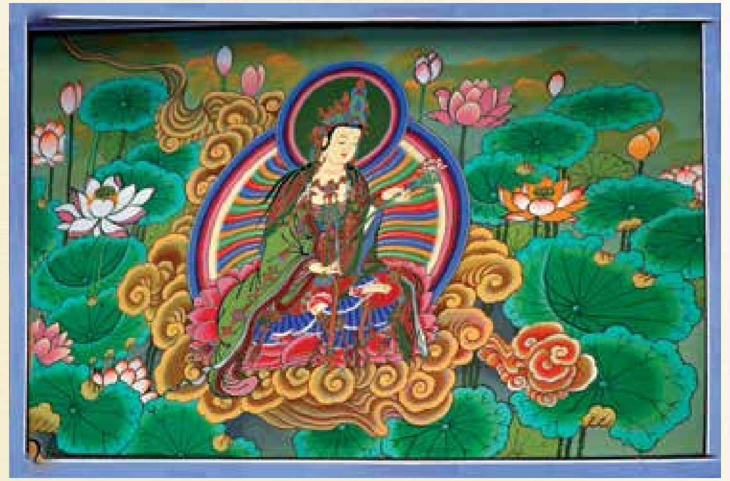
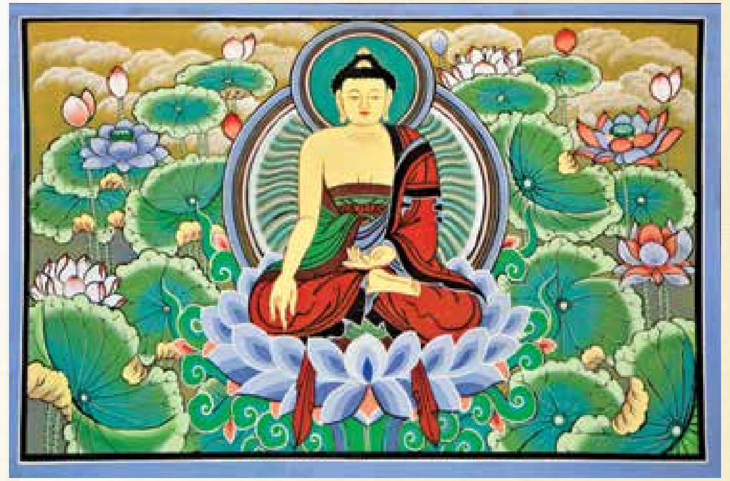
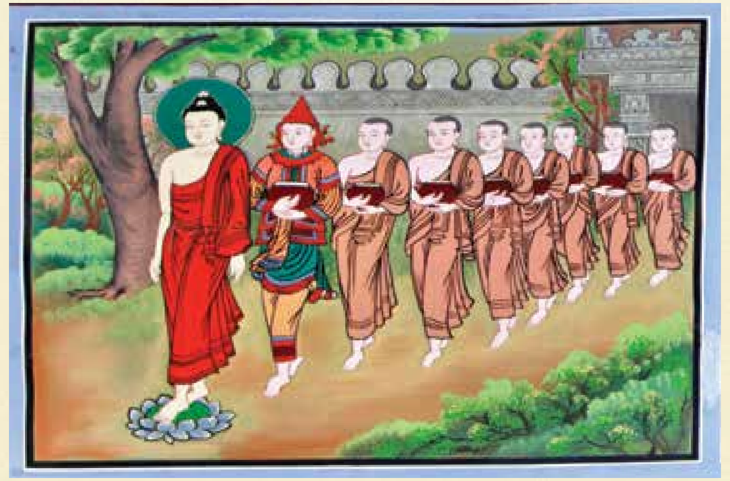
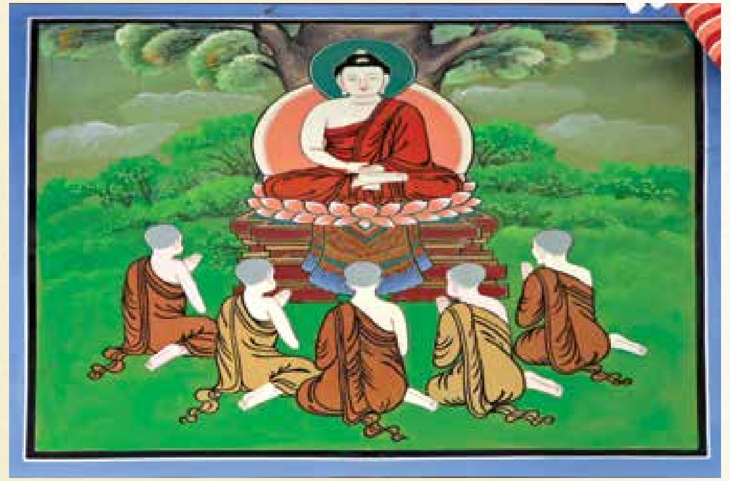
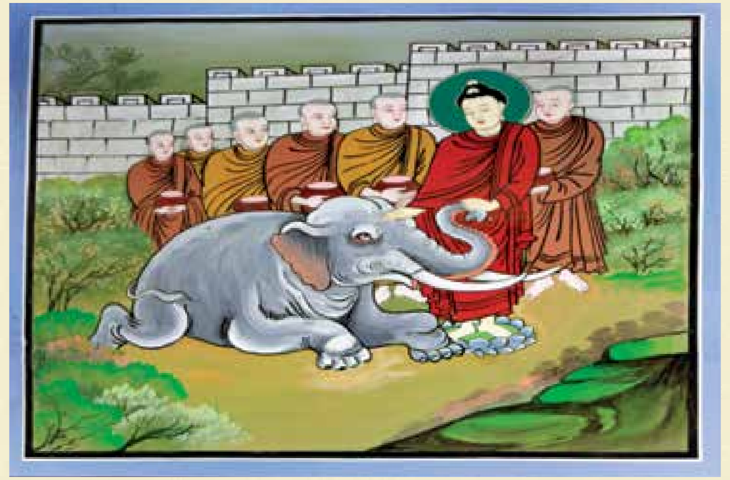
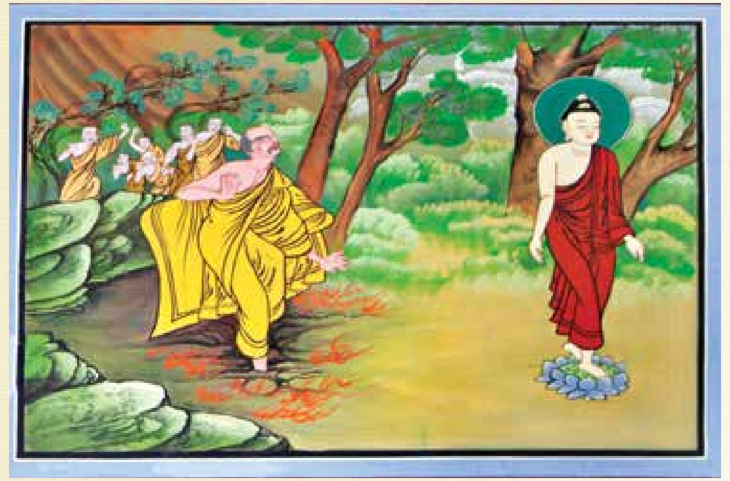
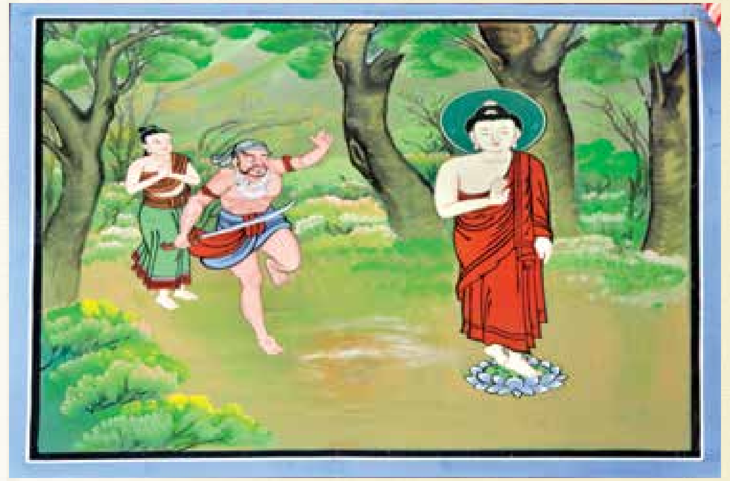
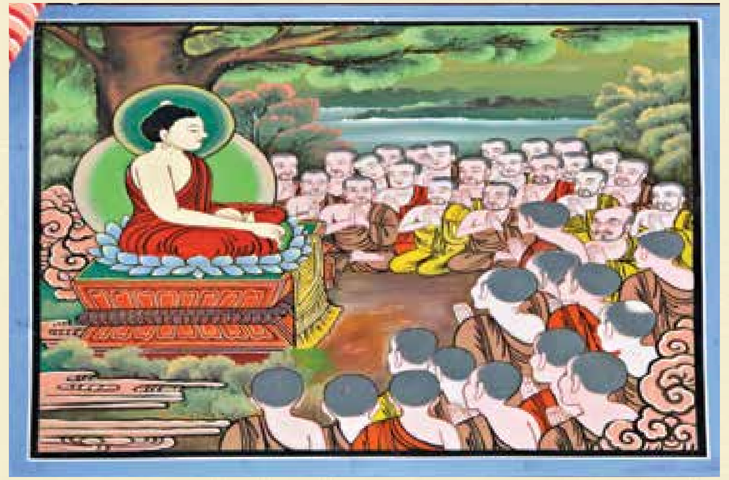
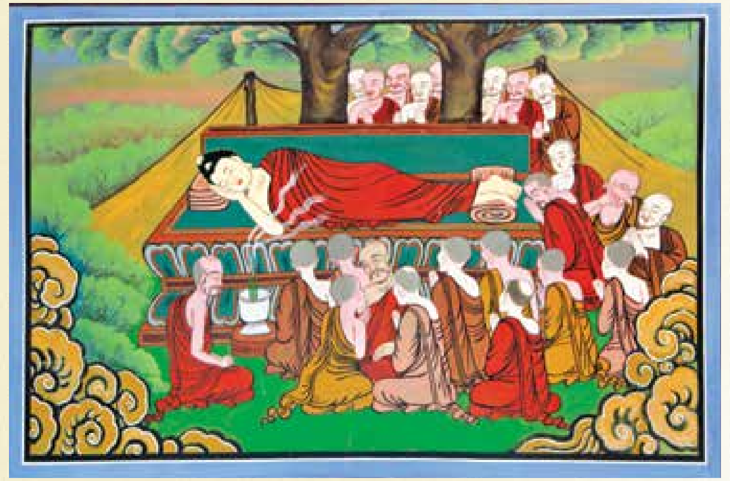
The temple has intricate traditional arts, with the pagoda-style ceiling and fine woodcraft reflecting Korean craftsmanship. The temple complex's main hall is highly decorated to enhance the beauty of its intricate architecture.

Korean Buddhist Art

This Korean monastery is adorned with the unique Tanchong style of painting, which originated in the 13th and 14th centuries and features red and blue colors, intricate patterns, and cosmic designs. Korean Buddhist art is distinct from that of other countries like China, Japan and Tibet and is characterized by its simplicity and natural beauty, unlike the magnificence often found in the art of these countries. The abundant use of red, green, blue, and white colours with Golden hues representing Buddha is noteworthy. Various Buddhist themes and Buddha's poses are depicted like the Buddha preaching the Lotus Sutra on Yangchuksan Mountain (Preaching at Yangsan) or scenes from the life of Shakyamuni. Other common themes include Vairocana Buddha, Amida Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Bodhisattvas, the Seven Guardian Deities, and the Enlightened Buddha. The Goryeo Dynasty reign during the 13th century was the golden age for Korean Buddhist art, with rich symbolism and meaningful paintings.

The paintings are not only pleasing for the eyes but convey a deep meaning. For instance, on the outer edge of the roof of these buildings, one may find three circles representing heaven, earth, and man as proclaimed by Tangun, the mythical founder of Korea. These are also symbolic of the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of Buddhists. Additionally, the swastika symbol, representing peace, goodwill, and good fortune, is displayed in the exterior building design, woven into patterns and even features on windows, door decorations, and railings.

*Source: **https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/buddhist-art/korean01.htm***

Myanmar (Burmese) Monastery

Coordinates : 24.699768, 84.996350

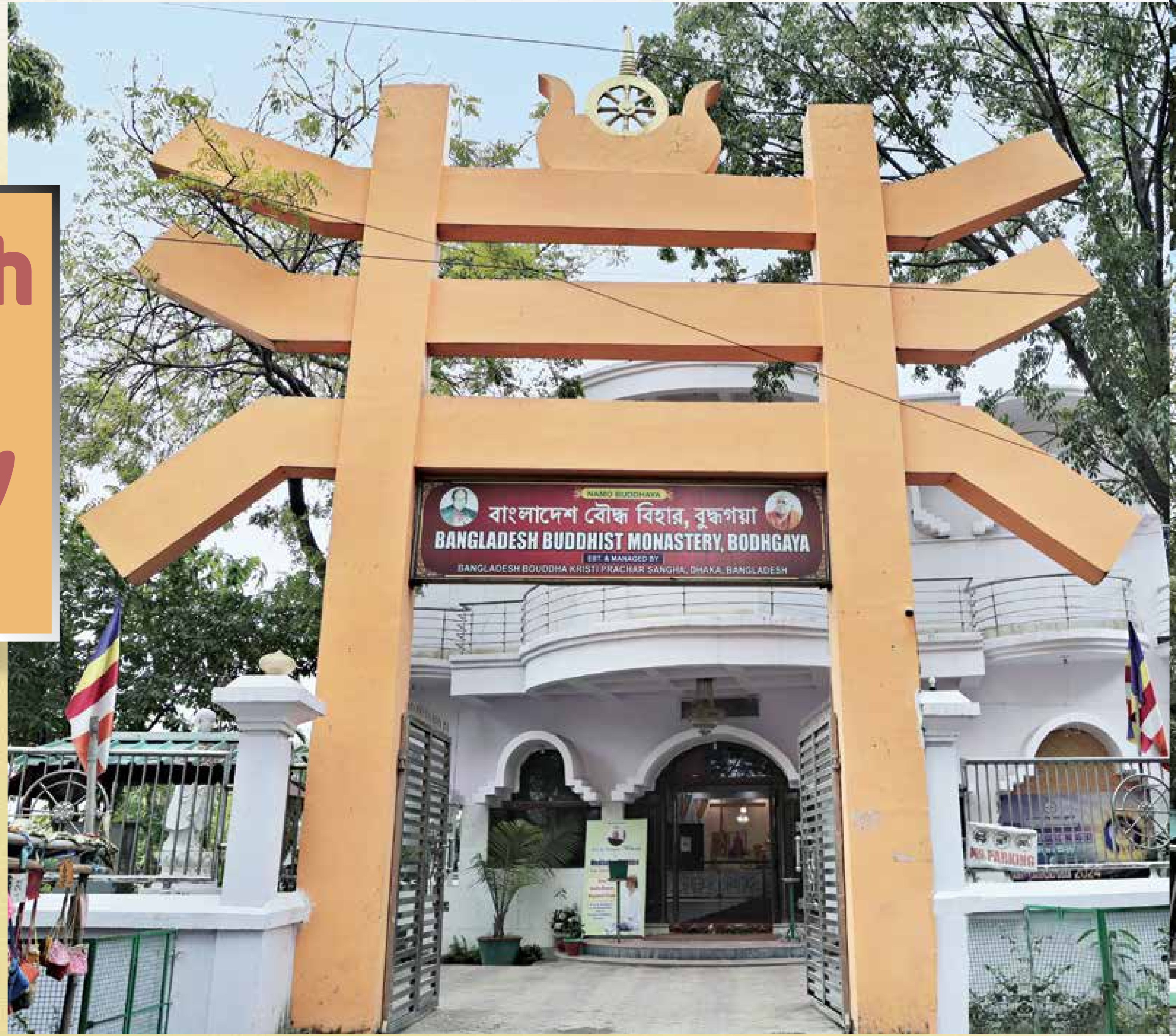
မြန်မာကျောင်း
BURMESE VIHAR BODH GAYA

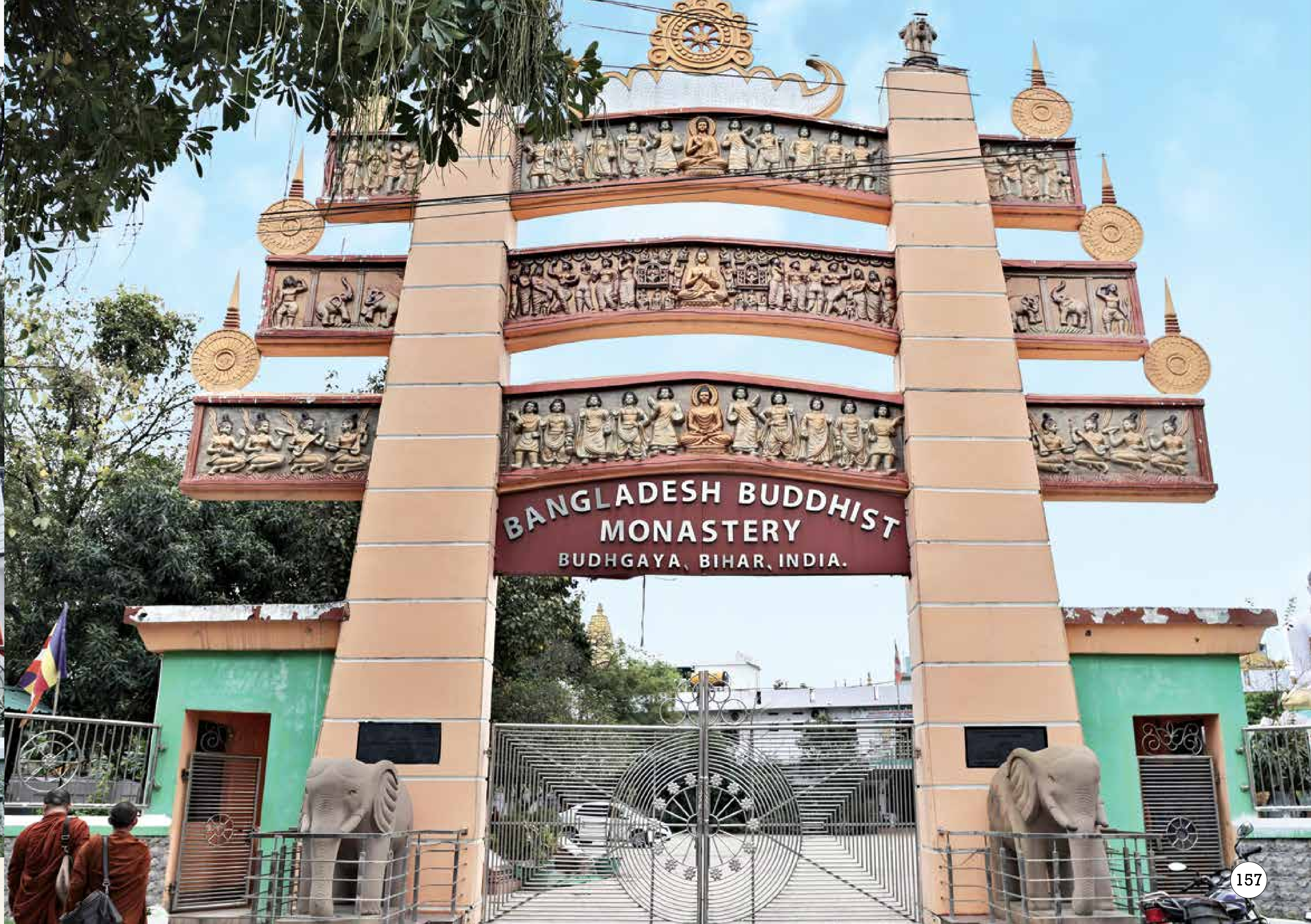
ANNIVERSARY
MEMORY OF

The Myanmar Buddhist Monastery is located northwest of the Mahabodhi Temple at Pacchatti turn (Pacchatti mode), in the main market. The Sujata bridge constructed by the Japanese over the Niranjana River is located opposite to this monastery. This bridge is the main path that leads to Sujata village (Senanigrama), now known as Bakraur. The foundation stone of this magnificent Buddhist monastery was laid in 1936 by the Burmese Buddhist monk Nandamala. It provides accommodations for monks and tourists visiting the Mahabodhi temple complex. The main temple consists of three floors, and has meditation and prayer rooms on two floors. The architecture of this monastery is inspired by traditional Burmese architecture, featuring intricate wood carvings around the statue of Lord Buddha. Notably, there is a unique idol made of bamboo straws, showcasing the exceptional craftsmanship of Myanmar.

Bangladesh Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69457, 84.98621


NAMO BUDDHAYA
বাংলাদেশ বৌদ্ধ বিহার, বুদ্ধগয়া
BANGLADESH BUDDHIST MONASTERY, BODHGAYA
EST. & MANAGED BY
BANGLADESH BOUDDHA KRISTI PRACHAR SANGHA, DHAKA, BANGLADESH
NO PARKING


BANGLADESH BUDDHIST
MONASTERY
BUDHGAYA, BIHAR, INDIA.

The Bangladesh Buddhist monastery is situated on the main road leading to the Mahabodhi Temple, 650 meters towards the west of the temple. The monastery provides a glimpse of Bengal's culture too. There is a significant presence of Buddhists in Bangladesh as the third largest population in the country. It is considered that Lord Buddha visited Bangladesh during his lifetime and laid the foundation of Buddhism in the region, which was later fostered by Emperor Ashoka. Consequently, Bangladesh has many ancient Buddhist monuments and monasteries, and in keeping with this tradition, a monastery was constructed here by the Buddhist community of Bangladesh.

Cambodian Monastery

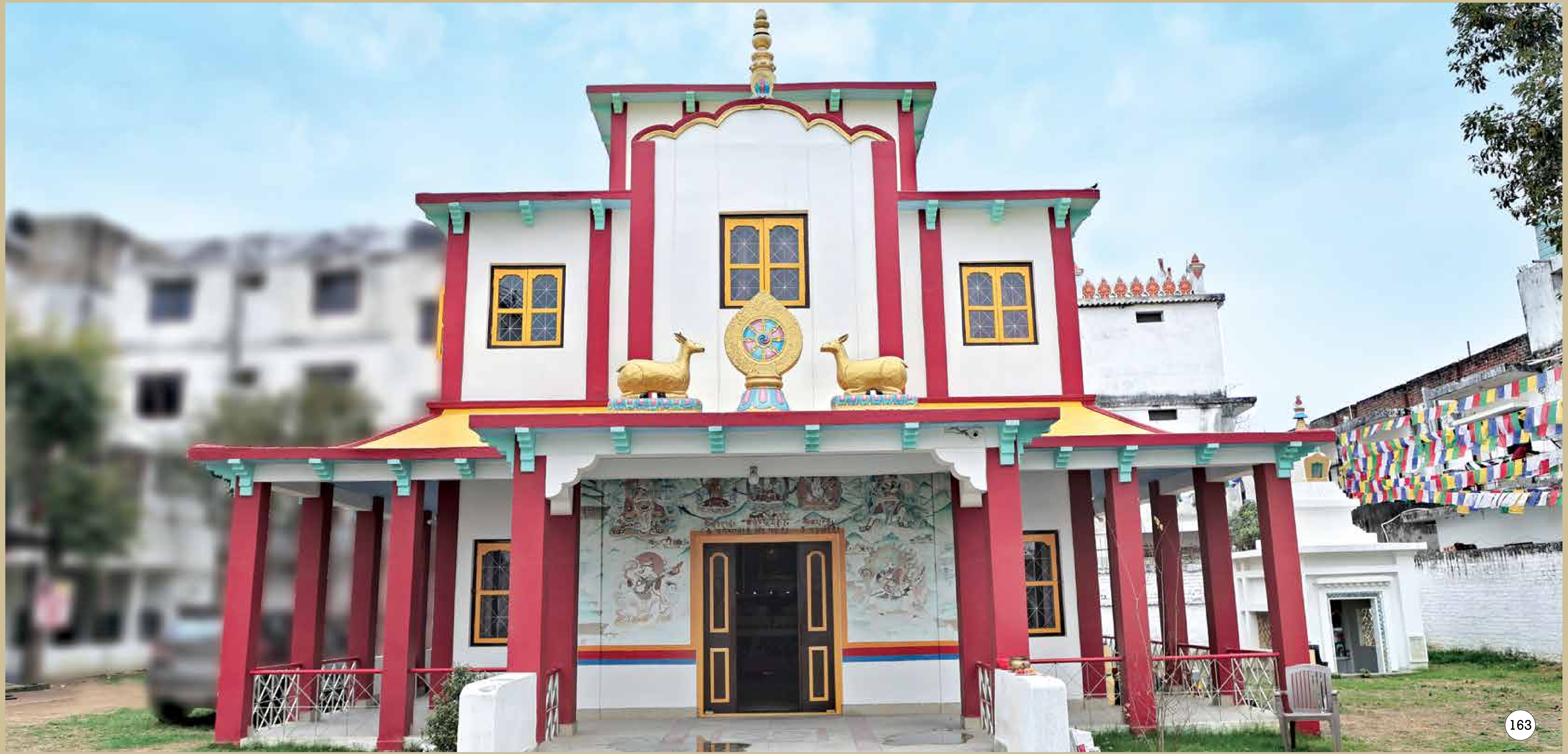
Coordinates : 24.68992, 84.98176

The Cambodian Monastery is along the western side of the Mahabodhi Temple. It was built by the Cambodian government in the late 19th century and is one of the most important pilgrimage sites for Buddhists around the world. It is a large building with the provision of meditation and prayer halls as well as accommodation for Buddhist monks.

The relationship between Cambodia and India date back to the Gupta Empire. The influence of the Gupta Empire on Cambodia was immense. Thus, the effect of Hinduism and Buddhism on the country is also depicted in the paintings adorning the Cambodian Monastery. The paintings on the walls of this monastery display stories related to Buddhism.

Tamang Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69508, 84.98698



On the western flank of the Mahabodhi Temple is the Tamang Monastery at a distance of 550 meters. This Buddhist Vihar is also known as Nepal Monastery. It is associated with the Tamang Buddhist Organization (Sangha) located in Darjeeling, West Bengal.

Nyingma Monastery

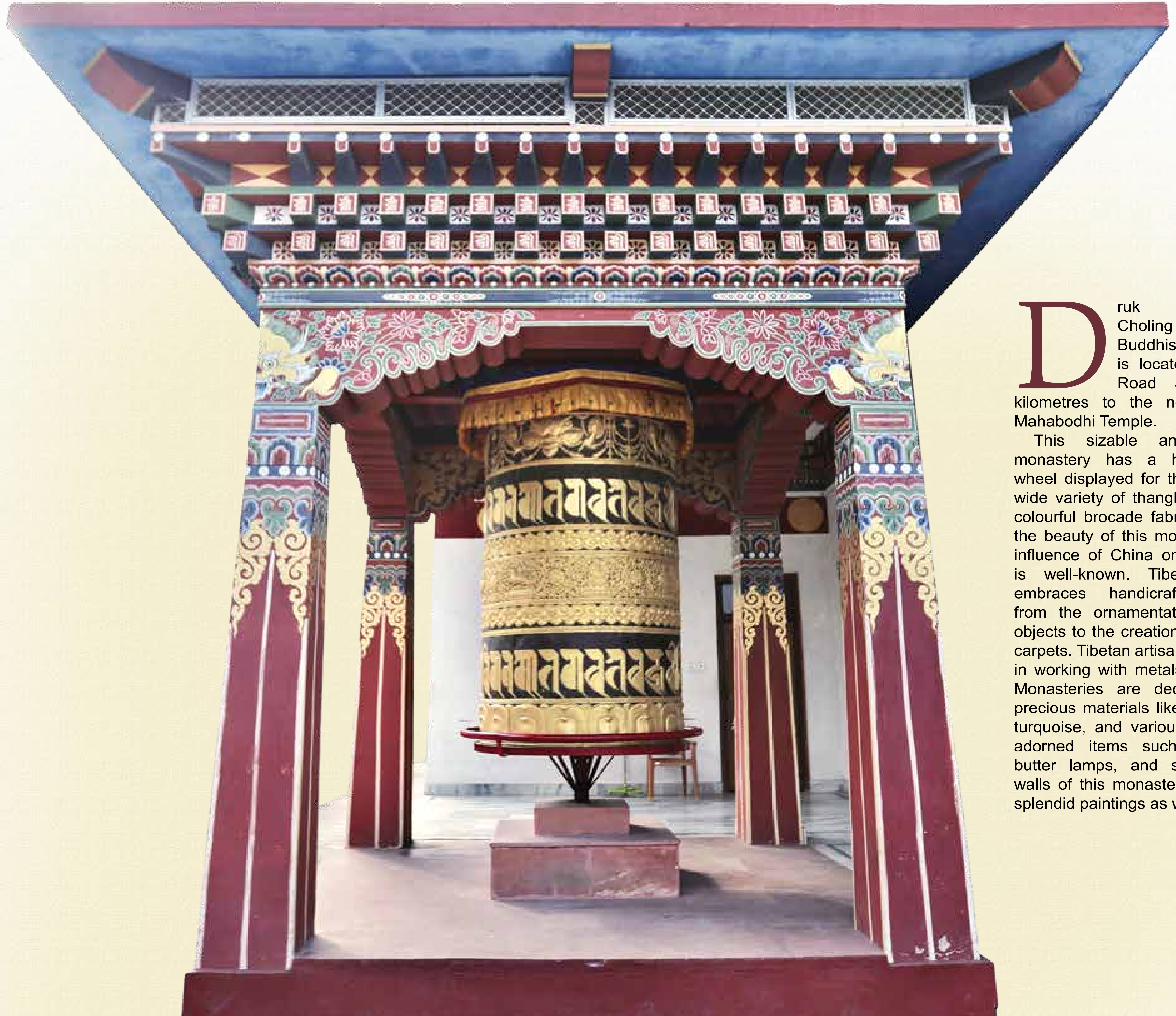
Coordinates : 24.69296, 84.97683

Nestled within the Roots Institute for Wisdom Culture is a modest but beautiful monastery called the Nyingma Monastery. It is located at a distance of 2 kilometres southwest from the Mahabodhi Temple. Tourists and monks from all over the world visit this Institute for spiritual education and imbibing Buddha's teachings. The institute has residences as well as mediation and prayer halls. Many statues of Buddha are enshrined here. It also houses gompas and a large prayer wheel.

Roots institute was established by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche in the year 1984. The institute has more than 170 monasteries in 30 countries including nine in India.

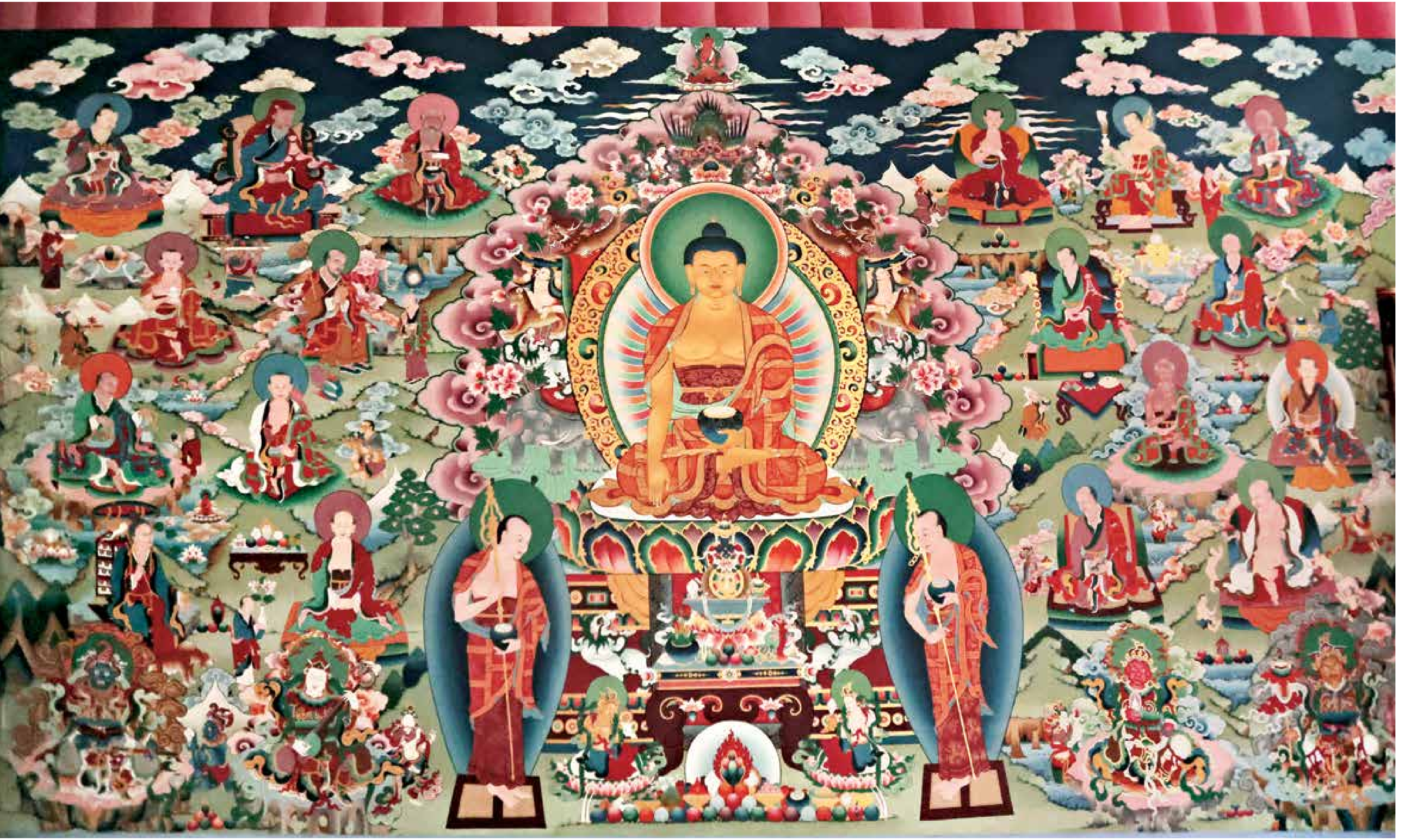
Druk Ngawang Choling Tibetan Buddhist Monastery

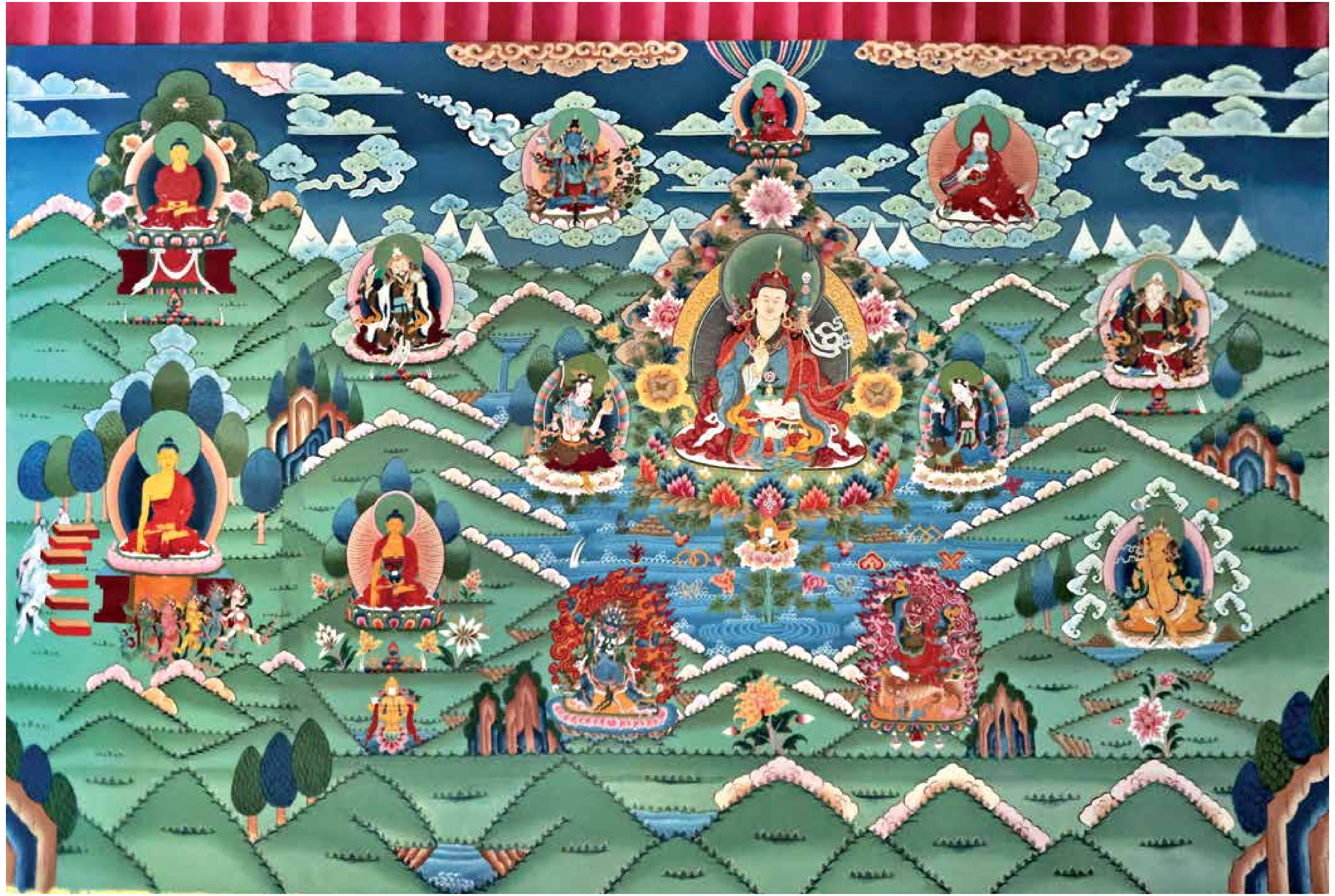
Coordinates : 24.70704, 84.96852



Druk Ngawang Choling Tibetan Buddhist Monastery is located at Latika Road Janpur, 3.4 kilometres to the north-west of Mahabodhi Temple.

This sizable and beautiful monastery has a huge prayer wheel displayed for the visitors. A wide variety of thangkas, silk and colourful brocade fabrics enhance the beauty of this monastery. The influence of China on Tibetan art is well-known. Tibetan culture embraces handicrafts, evident from the ornamentation of daily objects to the creation of exquisite carpets. Tibetan artisans are skilled in working with metals and gems. Monasteries are decorated with precious materials like gold, coral, turquoise, and various gemstone-adorned items such as bowls, butter lamps, and statues. The walls of this monastery showcase splendid paintings as well.





Metta Buddharam Temple

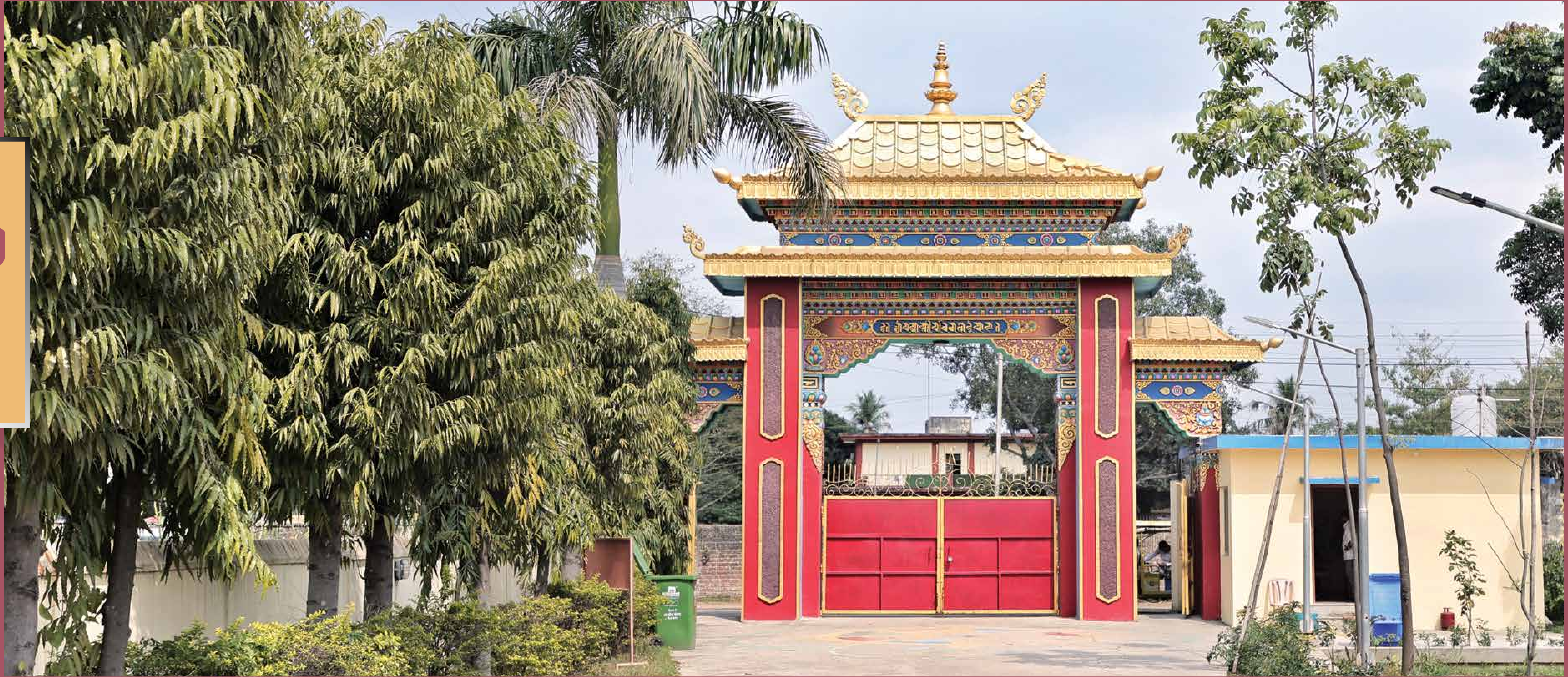
Coordinates : 24.69934, 84.98164

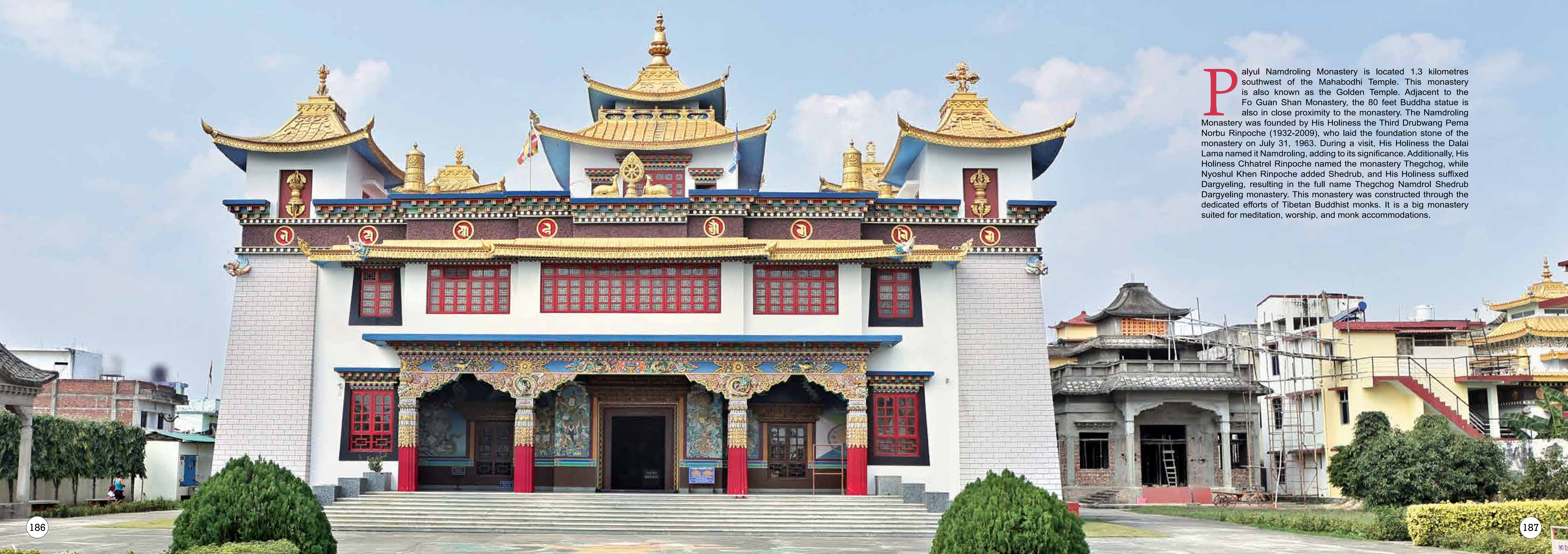
Metta Buddharam Temple is located on the Gaya road at a distance of 1.7 kilometres in the northwest direction from the Mahabodhi Temple. It is the second largest temple built by the people of Thailand. The site of the white Buddha statue in the backdrop of the blue sky that stands atop a high mound looks larger than life. There is another temple behind the Buddha statue which is not open for tourists.

Predominantly steel and glass have been used in the construction of the temple. Beautiful Thai architectural style can be observed in the temple. The placement of wind chimes in the temple is such that the whole atmosphere is abuzz with a soothing and melodious music. Though it is a modern temple, yet has a traditional charm. In Bodh Gaya, the Thai community is dedicated to conserving ancient Buddhist art through diverse temples while concurrently creating new Buddha statues. The magnificent white statue of Buddha under the blue sky gives a feeling as if Lord Buddha is watching over all of us.

Palyul Namdorling Buddhist Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69007, 84.98341





Palyul Namdroling Monastery is located 1.3 kilometres southwest of the Mahabodhi Temple. This monastery is also known as the Golden Temple. Adjacent to the Fo Guan Shan Monastery, the 80 feet Buddha statue is also in close proximity to the monastery. The Namdroling Monastery was founded by His Holiness the Third Drubwang Pema Norbu Rinpoche (1932-2009), who laid the foundation stone of the monastery on July 31, 1963. During a visit, His Holiness the Dalai Lama named it Namdroling, adding to its significance. Additionally, His Holiness Chhatrel Rinpoche named the monastery Thegchog, while Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche added Shedrub, and His Holiness suffixed Dargyeling, resulting in the full name Thegchog Namdrol Shedrub Dargyeling monastery. This monastery was constructed through the dedicated efforts of Tibetan Buddhist monks. It is a big monastery suited for meditation, worship, and monk accommodations.

प्रवेश
निषेध
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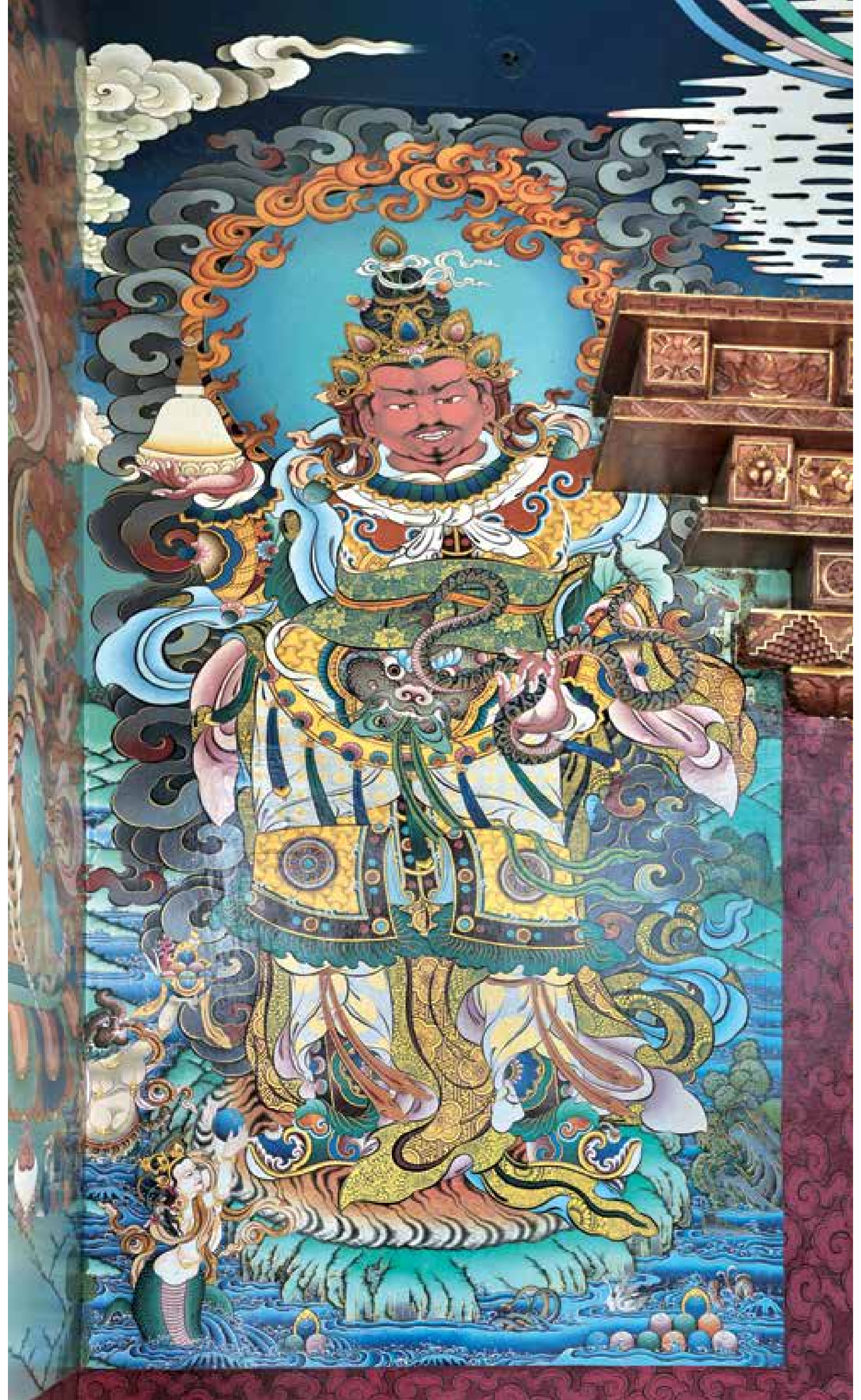
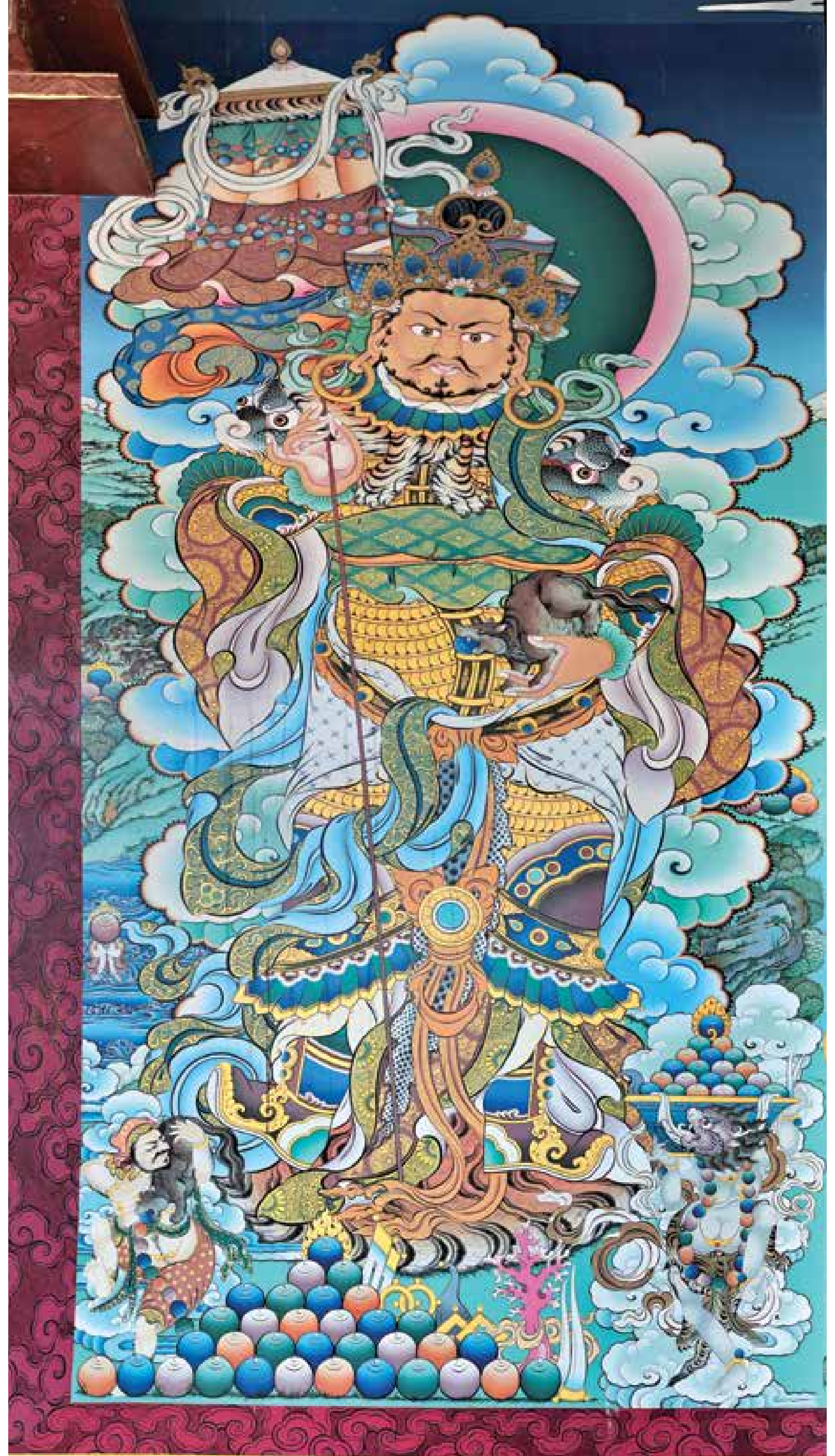
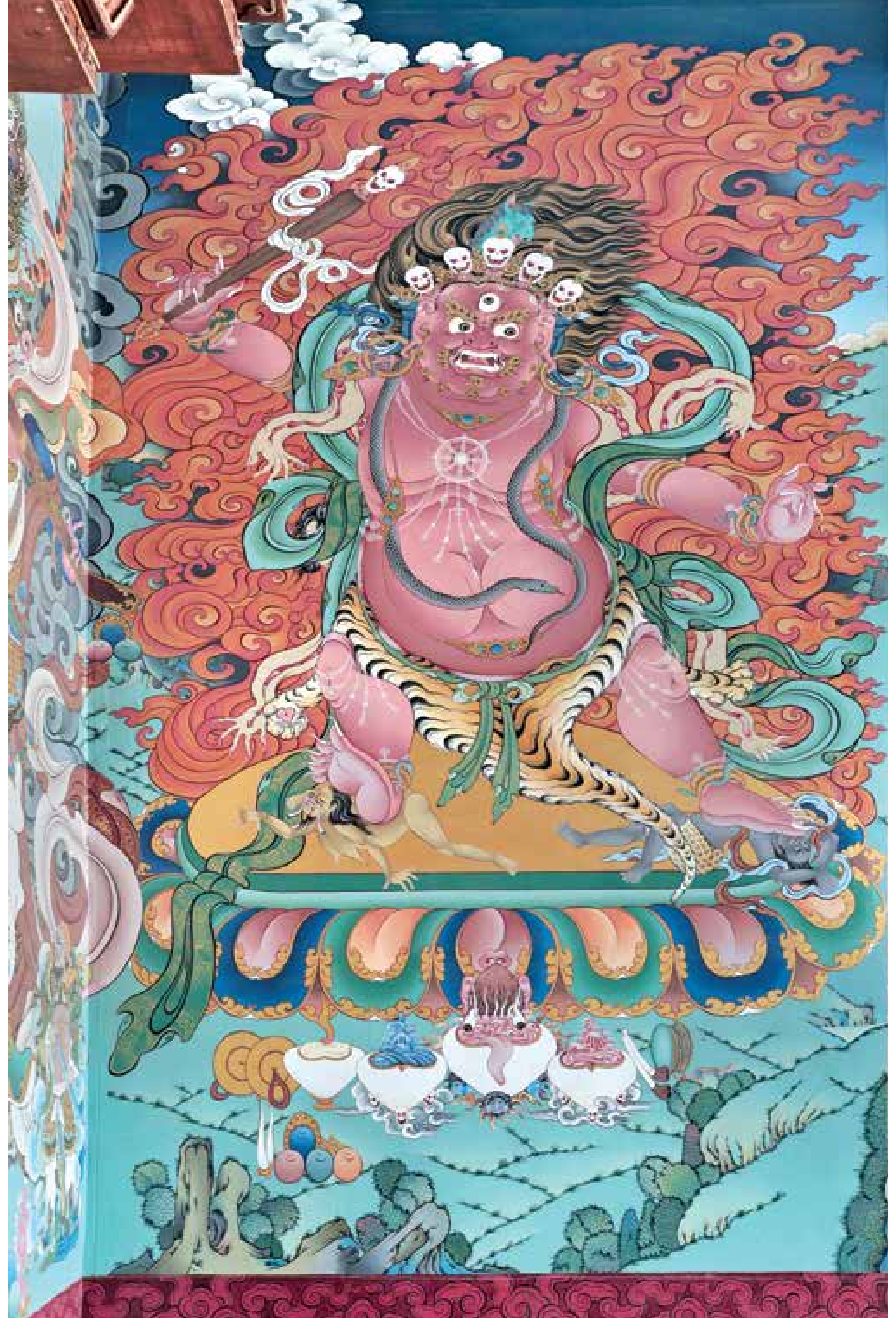
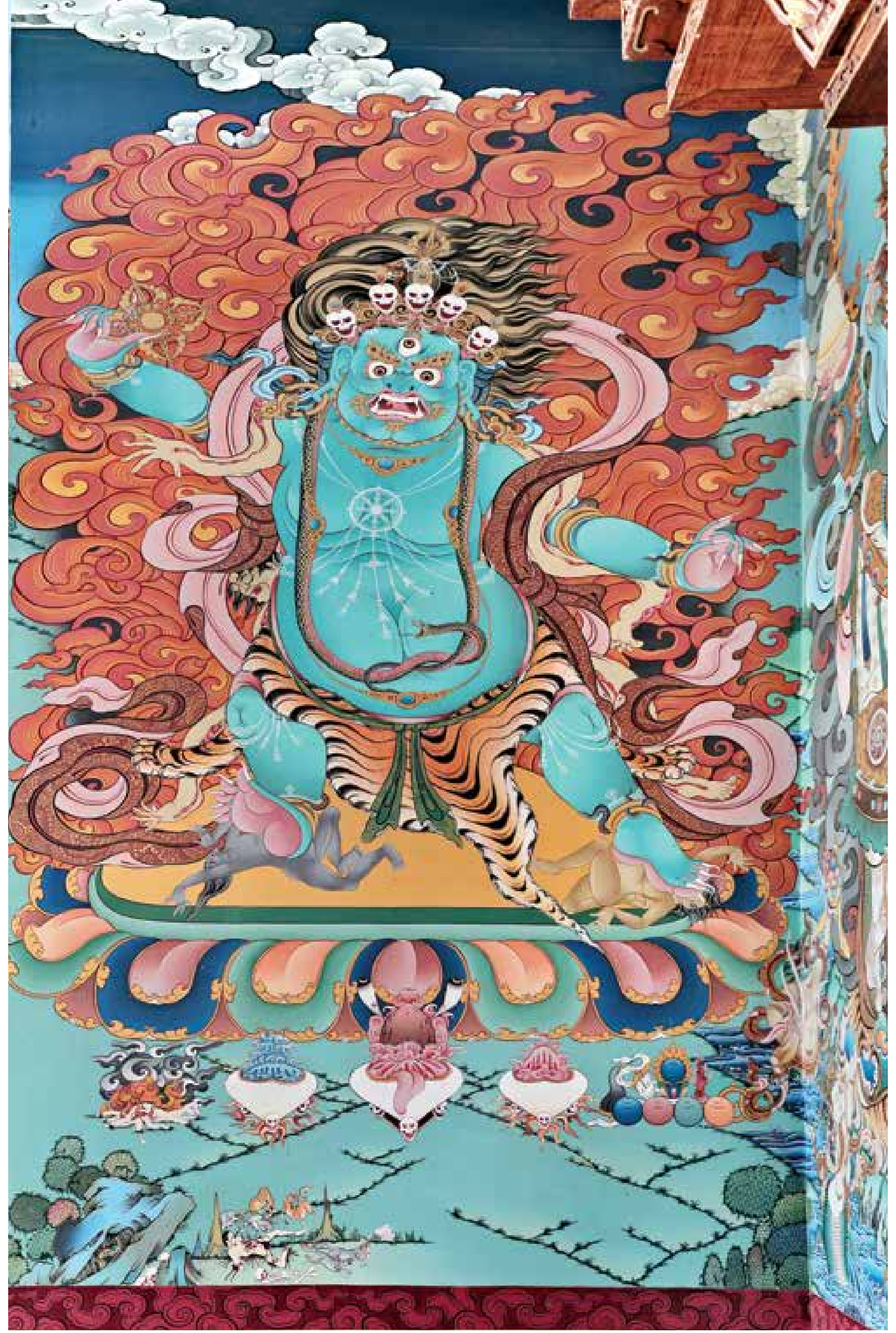
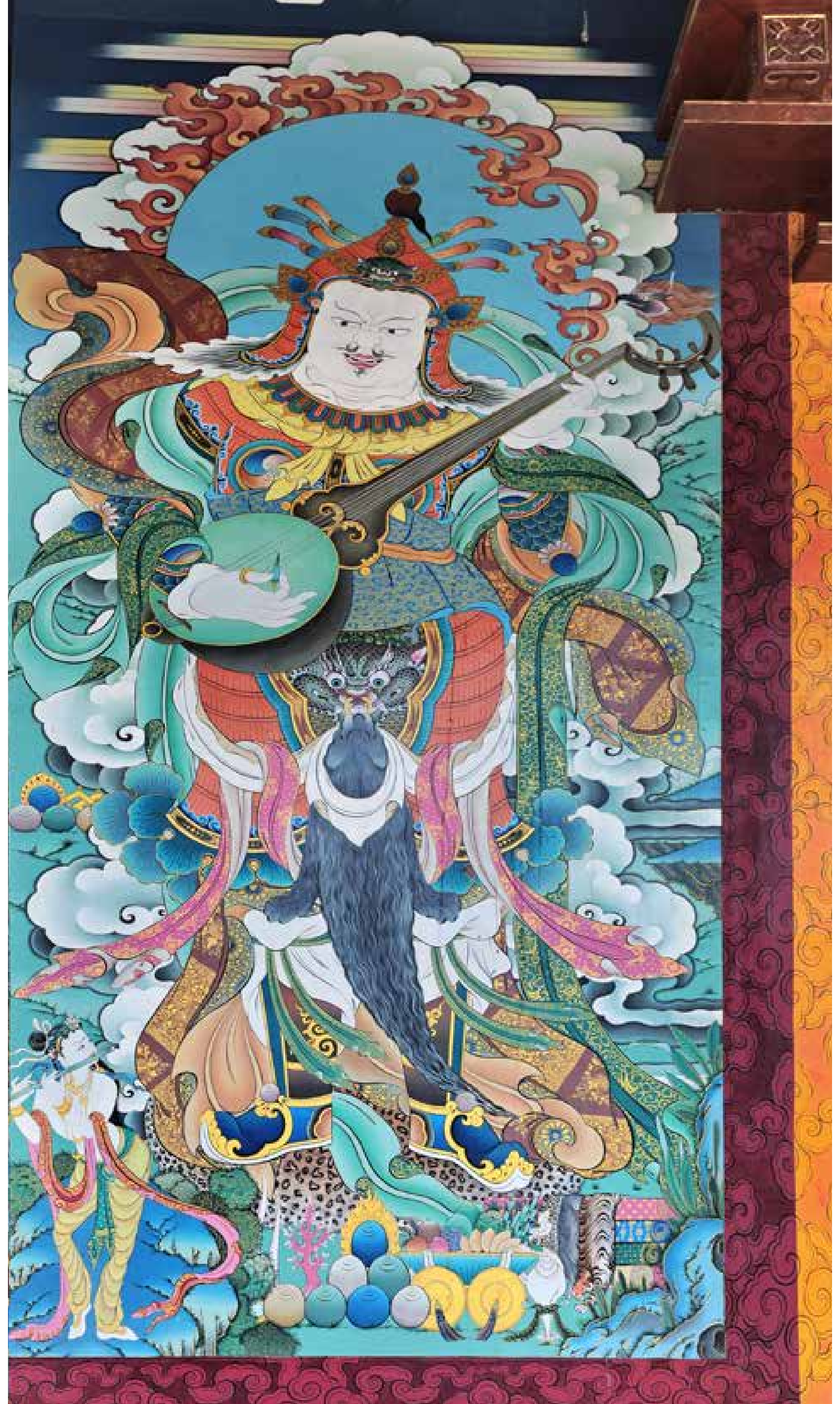
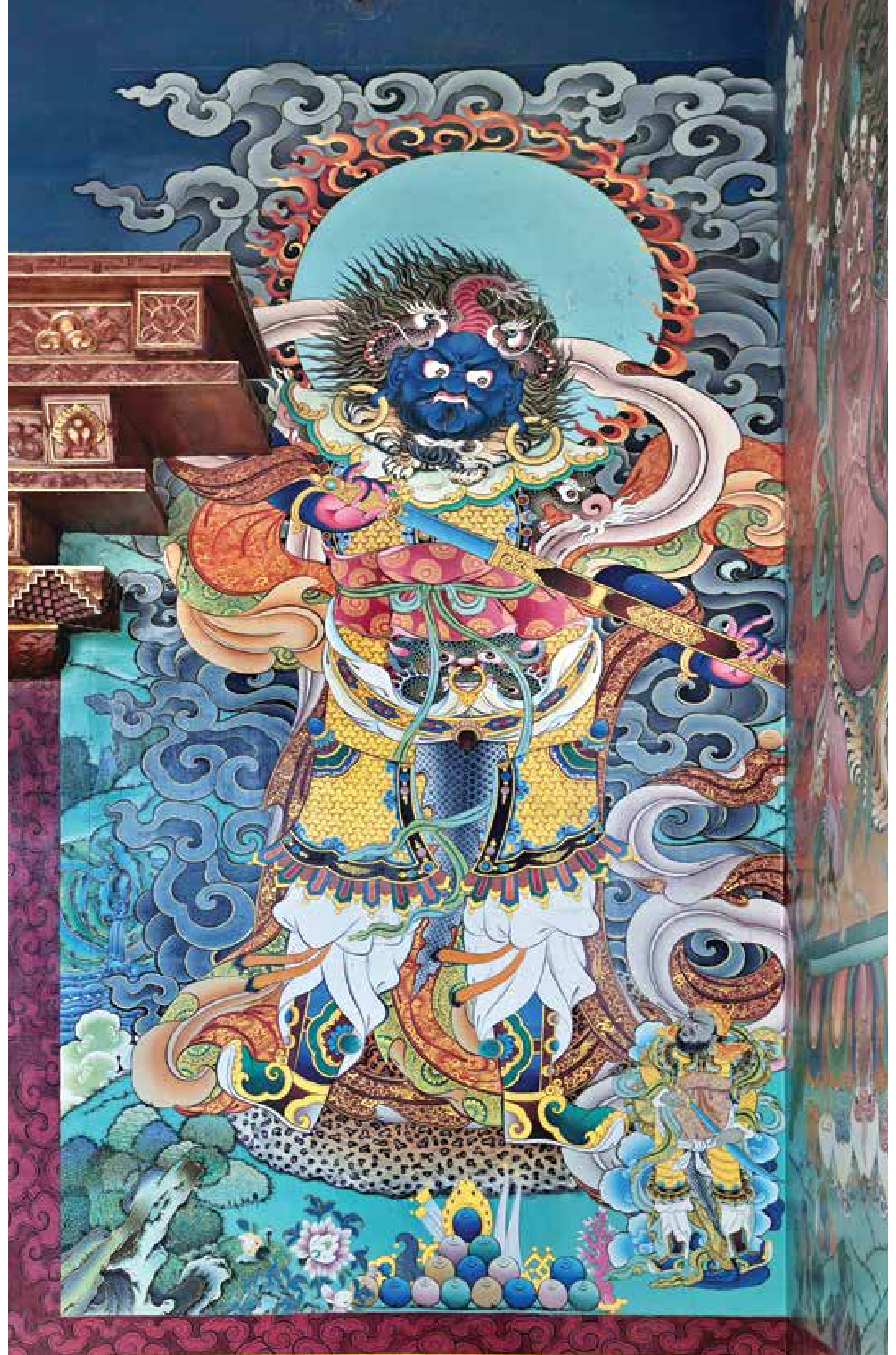


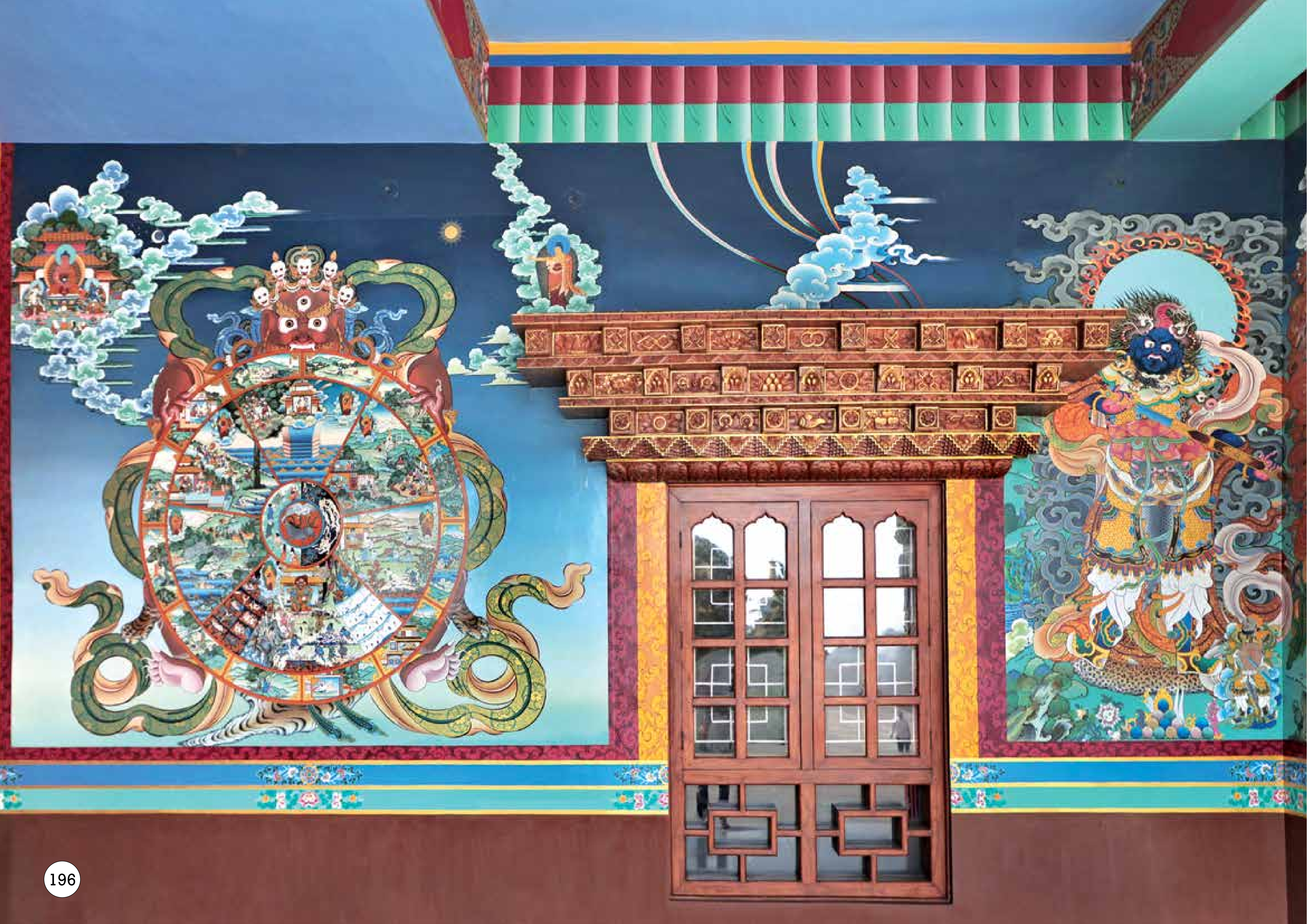


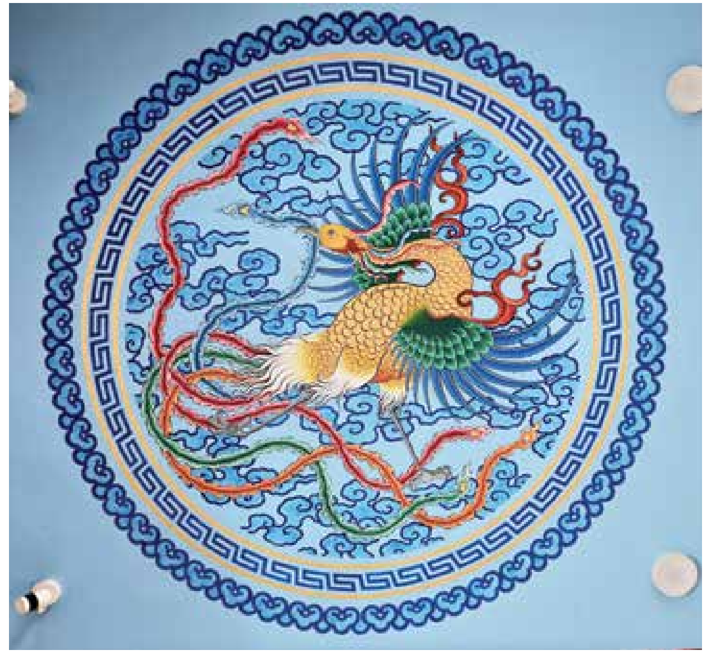


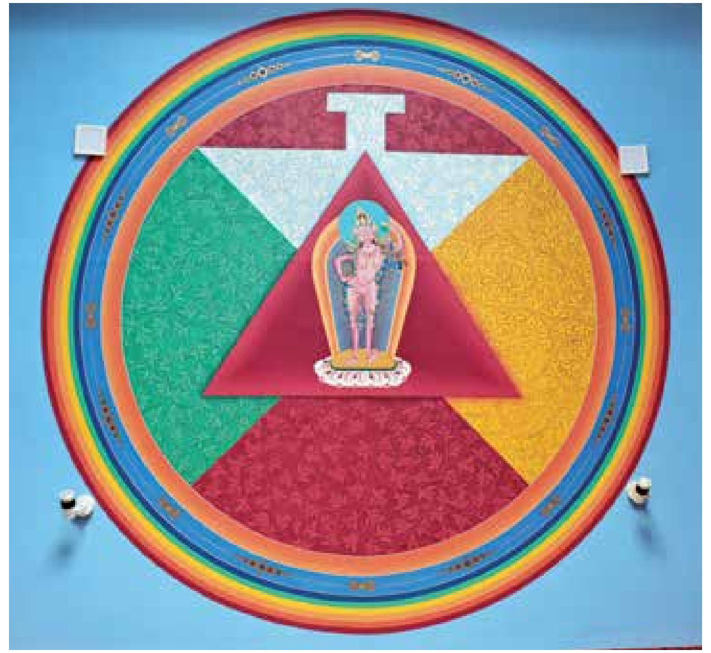


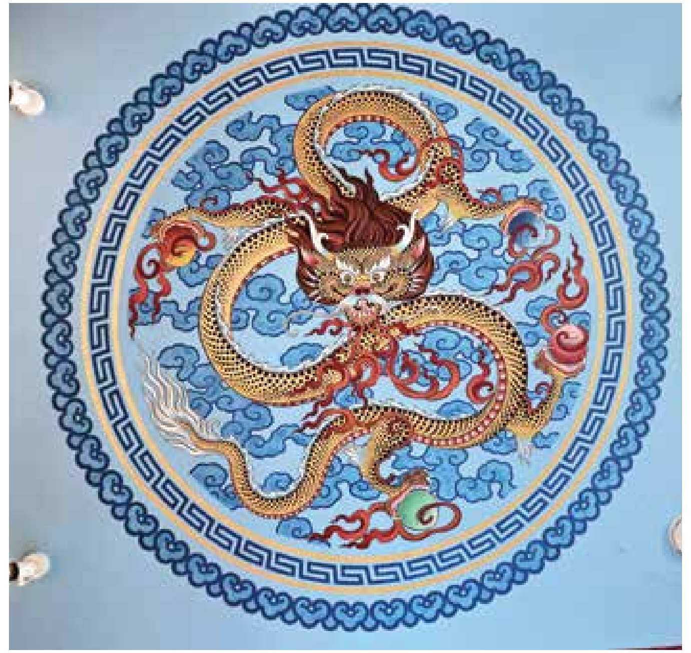


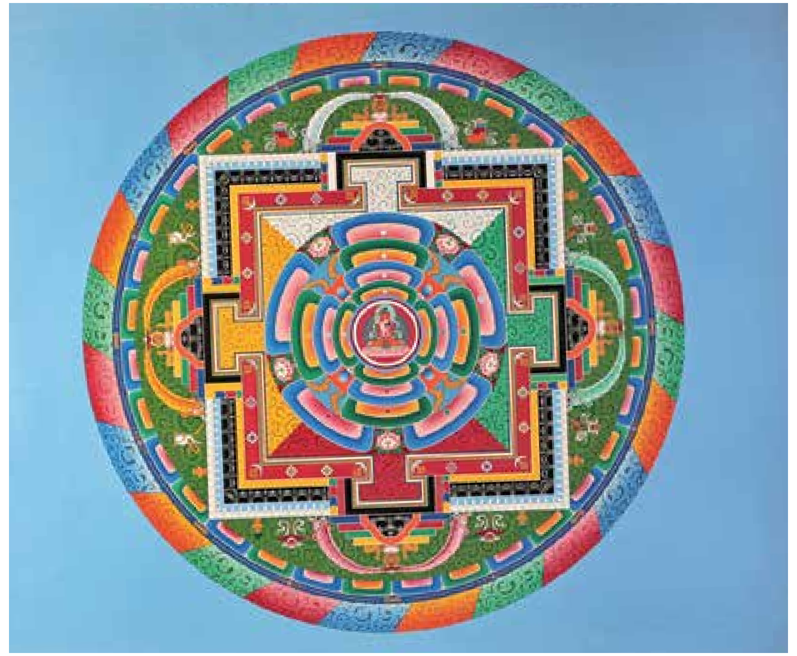


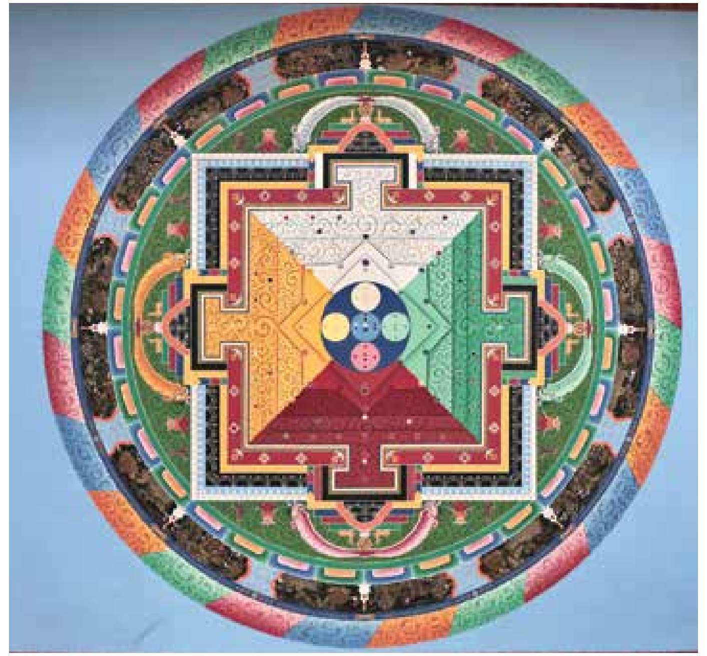












Ramanyabhumi Buddha Vihara

Coordinates : 24.68696, 84.98107

RAMANYABHUMI BUDDHA VIHARA

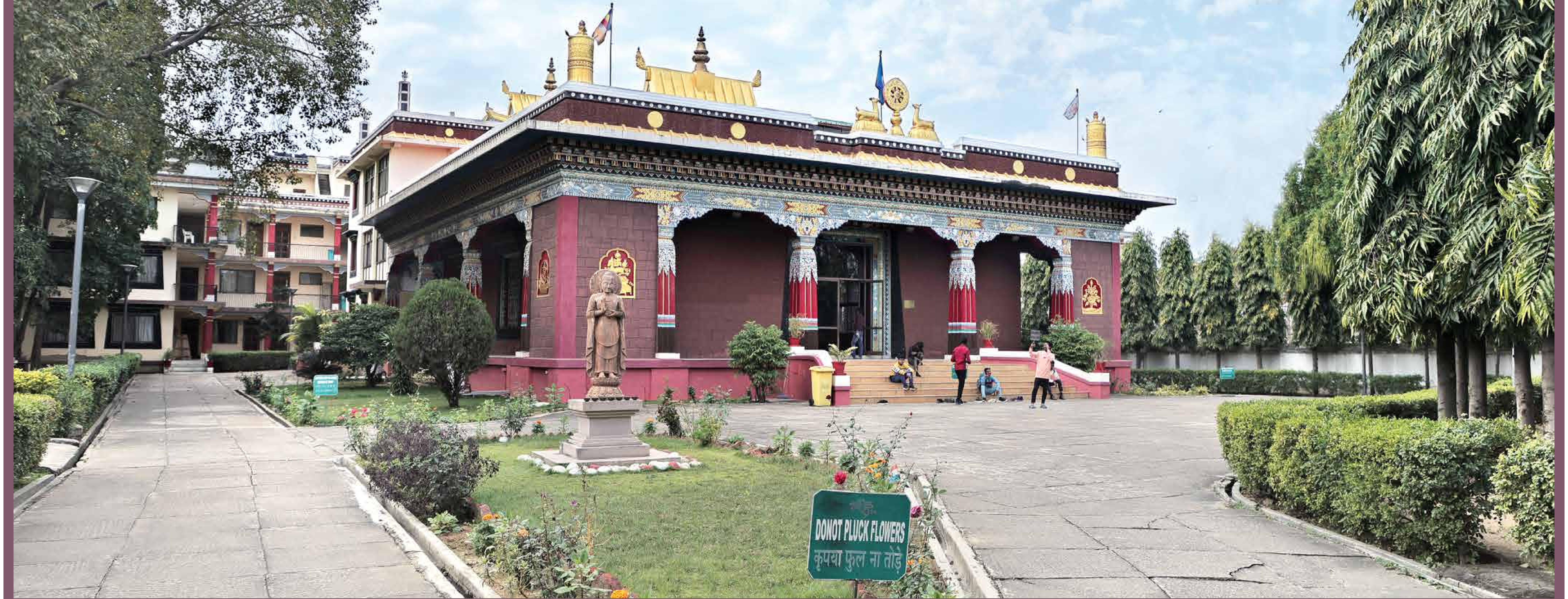
रामञ्ञा भूमि बुद्धा विहार
NAMO BUDDHAYA SIDDHAM
B.E.2554
RAMANYABHUMI BUDDHA VIHARA
A.D.2011

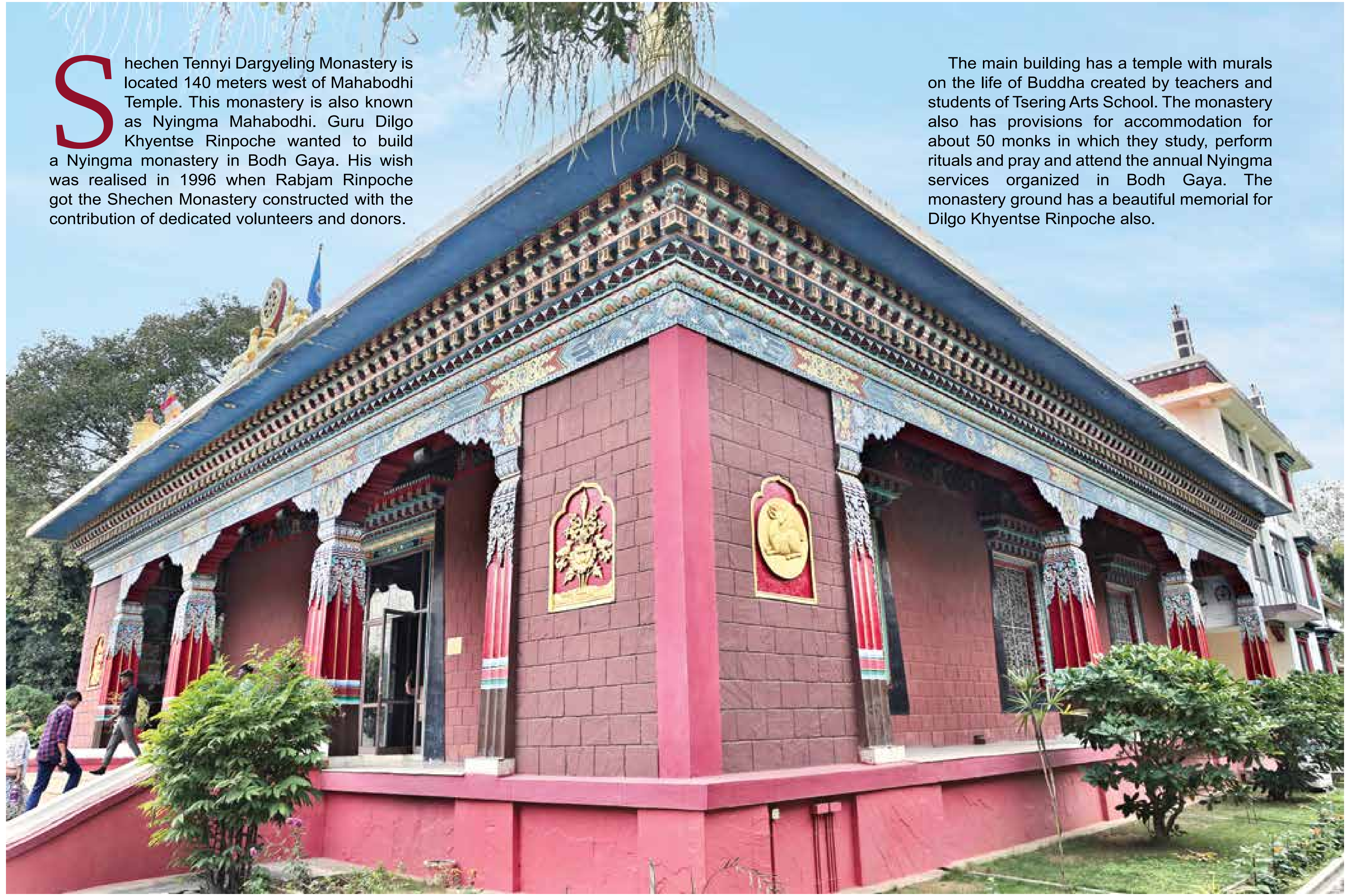
RAMANYABHUMI BUDDHAVIHARA

Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69654, 84.98821

SHECHEN TENNYI DARGYELING


DONOT PLUCK FLOWERS
कृपया फुल ना तोड़े

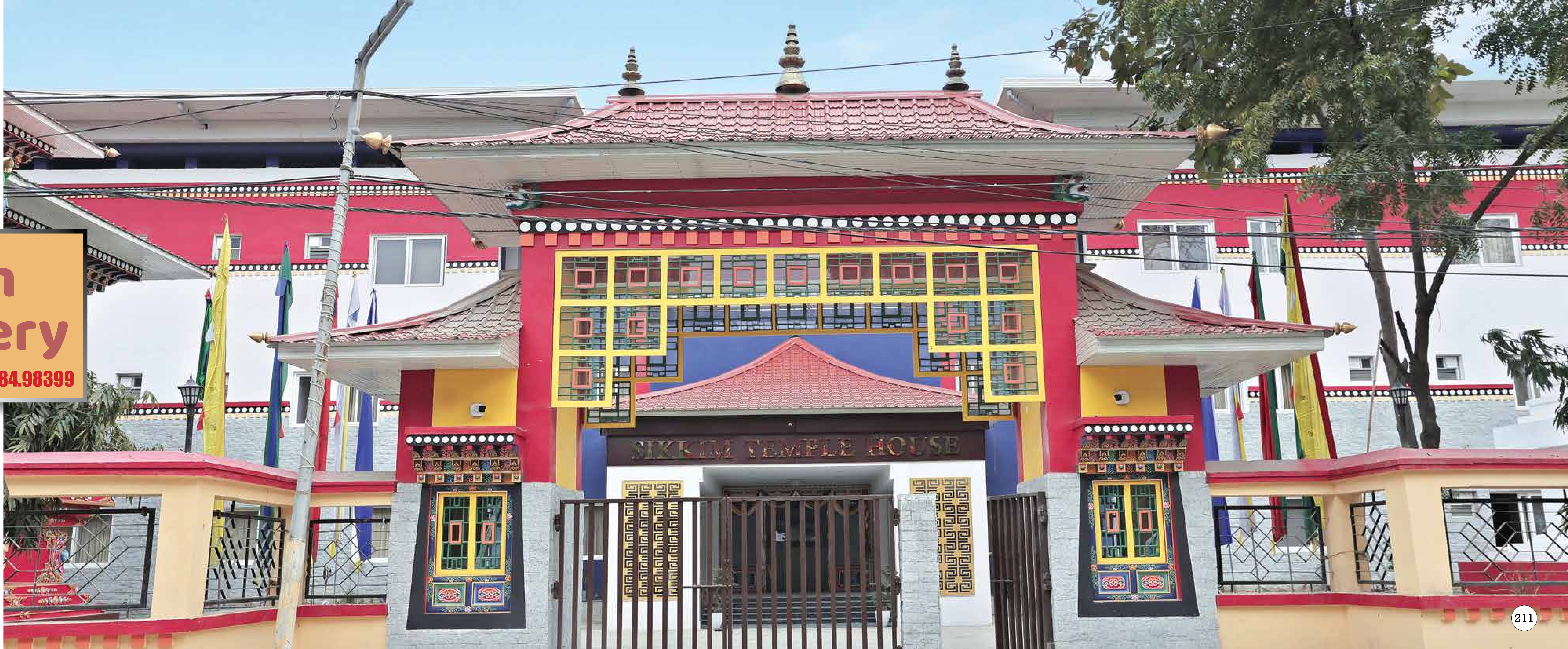


Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling Monastery is located 140 meters west of Mahabodhi Temple. This monastery is also known as Nyingma Mahabodhi. Guru Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche wanted to build a Nyingma monastery in Bodh Gaya. His wish was realised in 1996 when Rabjam Rinpoche got the Shechen Monastery constructed with the contribution of dedicated volunteers and donors.

The main building has a temple with murals on the life of Buddha created by teachers and students of Tsering Arts School. The monastery also has provisions for accommodation for about 50 monks in which they study, perform rituals and pray and attend the annual Nyingma services organized in Bodh Gaya. The monastery ground has a beautiful memorial for Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche also.

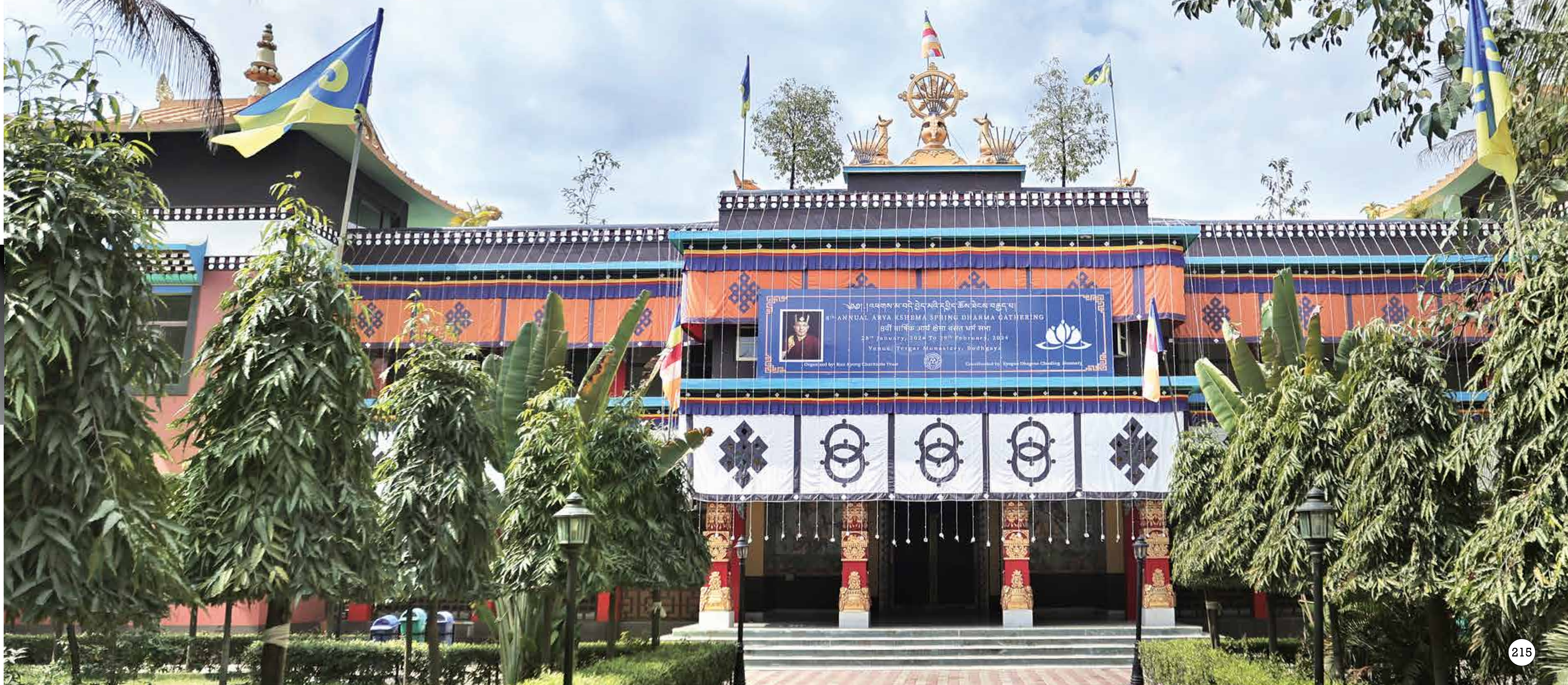
Sikkim Monastery

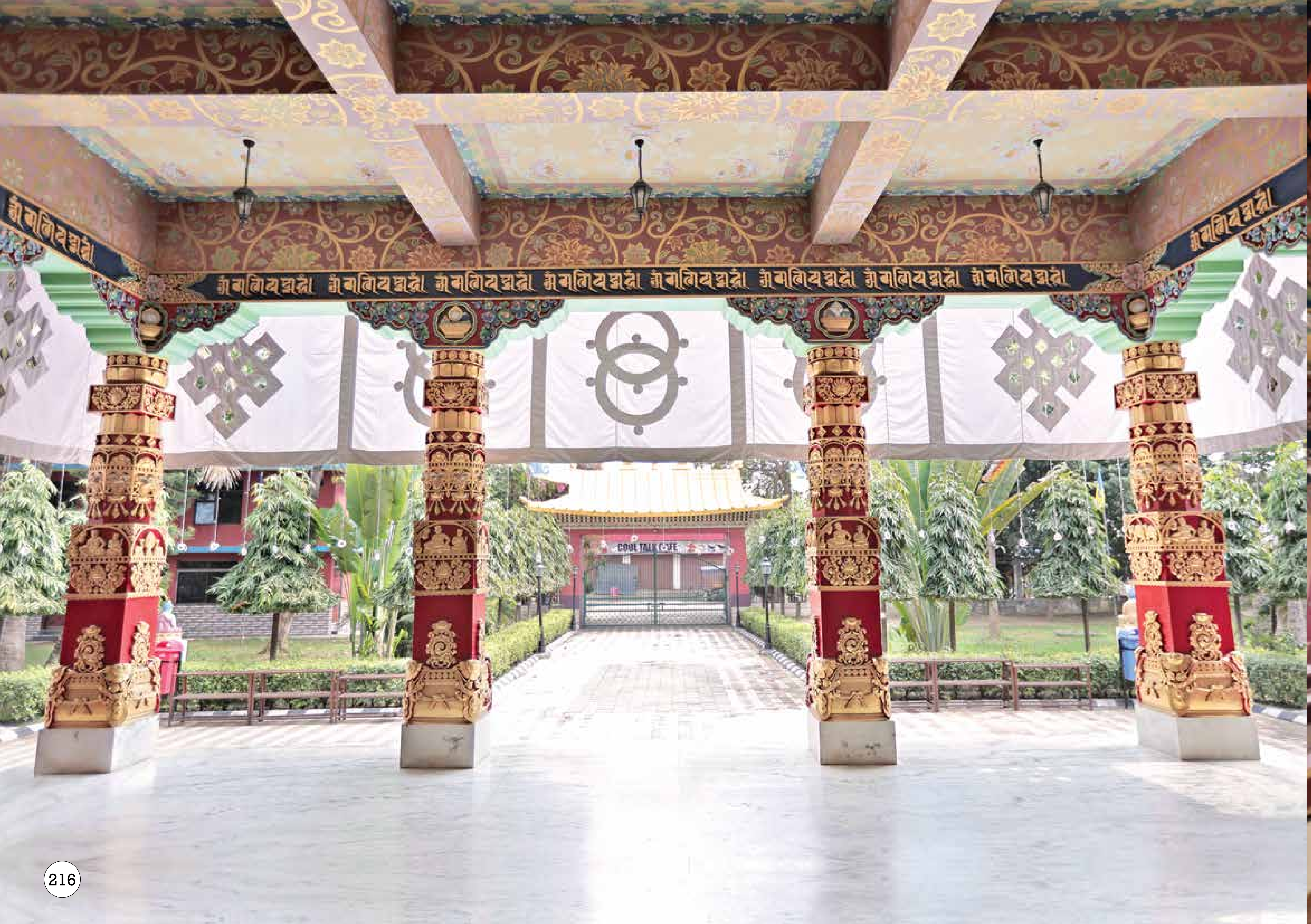
Coordinates : 24.693012, 84.98399

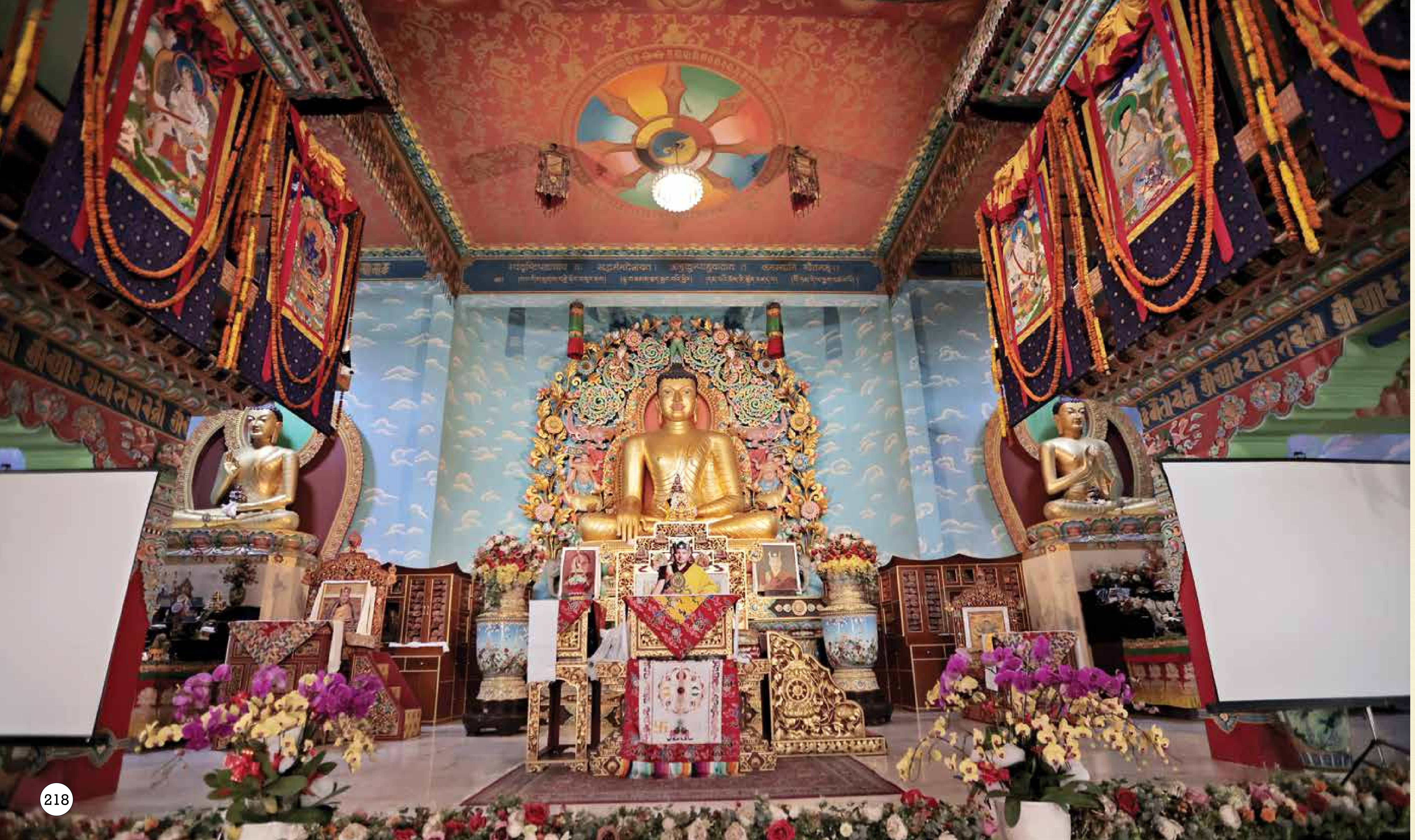

SIKKIM TEMPLE HOUSE

Tergar Monastery

Coordinates : 24.70290, 84.98328


ANNUAL ARYA KSHEMA SPRING DHARMA GATHERING
Venue: Tergar Monastery, Bodhgaya


COOL TALK CAFE

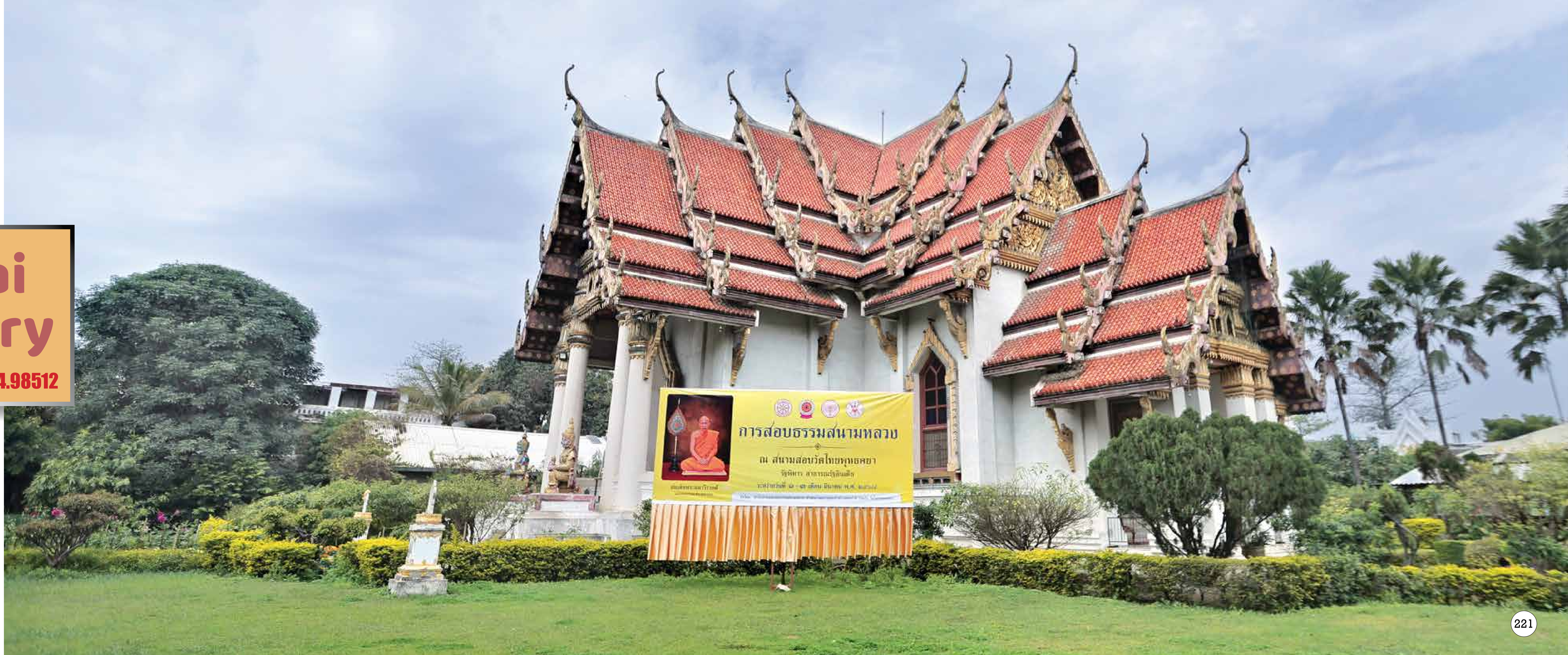


Tergar Monastery is located at a distance of approximately 2.1 kilometres in the southwest direction from Mahabodhi Temple.

Tergar Bodh Gaya Monastery, is also known as Pal Tergar Dhargye Ling Monastery. It includes a school where young monks engage in Buddhist experiential curriculum along with contemporary academic subjects like Science, English, and Computer. Mingyur Rinpoche oversaw the construction of the monastery between the years 2003 to 2006, and presently, it accommodates over 300 monks. The monastery organizes the Kagyu Monlam prayer festival, Karma Guncho winter teaching session, and various significant ceremonies every year.

Wat Thai Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69484, 84.98512


การสอบธรรมสนามหลวง
ณ สนามสอบวัดไทยพุทธคยา
รัฐพิหาร สาธารณรัฐอินเดีย

วัดไทยพุทธคยา
WAT THAI BUDDHAGAYA
JOCKEY

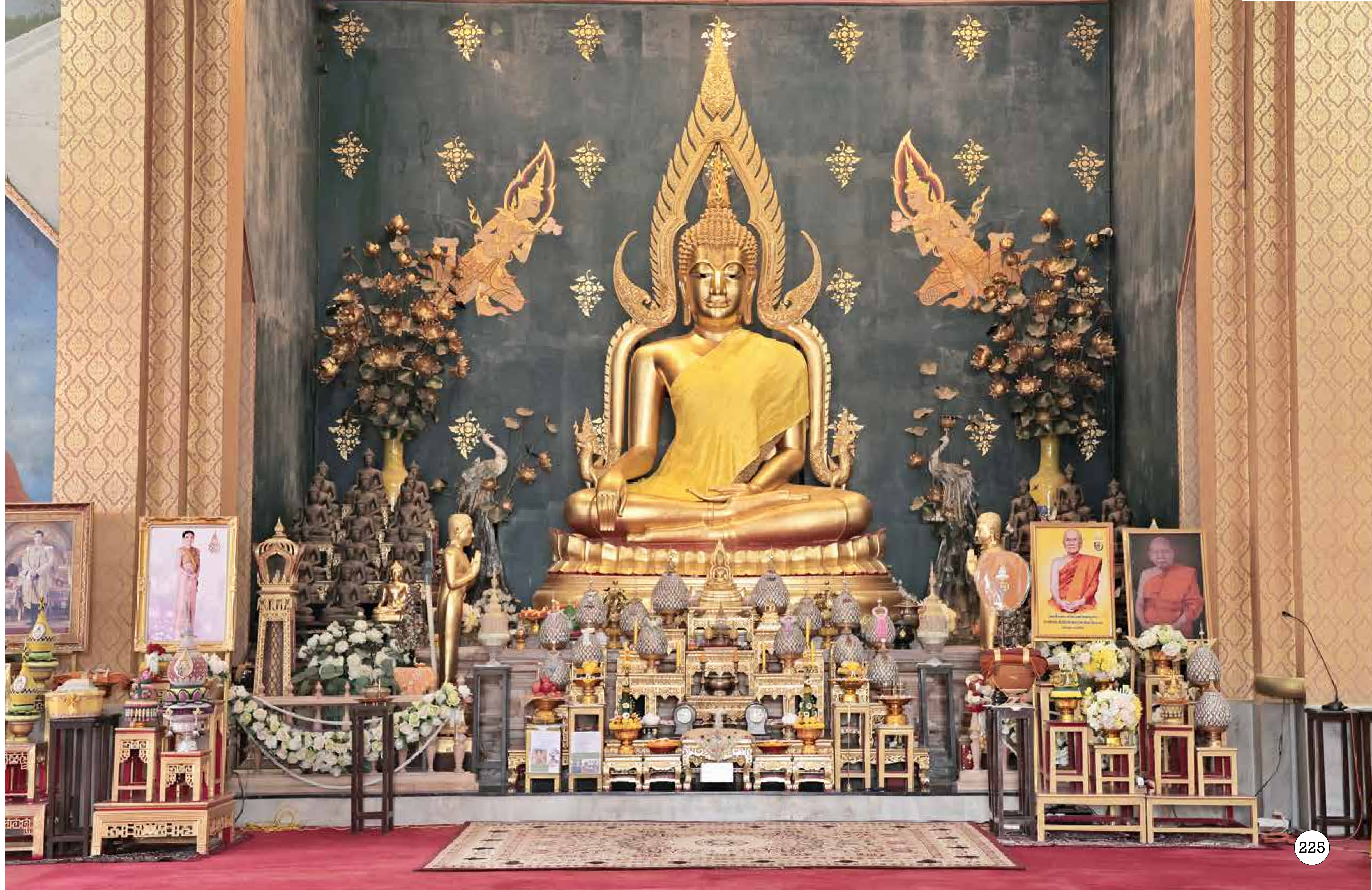
Wat Thai Monastery is the first Buddhist monastery of Thailand to be established in India. This monastery is built in the traditional architectural pagoda style of Thailand with orange coloured tiled roofs sloping towards the edges. The construction of the monastery started in 1957 during the rule of the late King Param Janakadhipeshwar Mahabhumibal Atulyatej Maharaj Param Pavitra.

On the occasion of the 25th centenary of the establishment of Buddhism, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited various Buddhist countries to build Buddhist monasteries depicting the art, culture and architectural style of their countries in Bodh Gaya to commemorate Buddha Jayanti. The Government of India also earmarked land for interested countries formalised at the governmental level. A 99-year lease contract with a clause for the renewal of the contract for an additional 50 years after the expiry was provisioned.

The construction of the Thai Buddhist monastery started in the year 1957 and on March 6, 1966, the boundary of the temple was officially established in accordance with Thai government and Buddhist cultural practices. The area of the complex is about five acres and is located at a distance of about 500 meters from the Mahabodhi Temple. Wat Thai Monastery is maintained directly by the Thai government. At present, Venerable Phra Dharmabodhivansh is the head of the monastery.

The design of the main building of the Thai Monastery is based on the Benchamabophit Dusitbanaram Rajbar Vihar in Bangkok. Inside this central structure, a replica of Thailand's renowned Phra Buddha Jinaraja Buddha idol has also been enshrined. The ceremonial installation of this idol at the Benchamabophit Buddhist Monastery was graced by the esteemed King Param Janakadhipeshwar, Mahabhoomibal Atulyatej, Maharaj Paramnath as chief guests. His Majesty the King bestowed the idol with the title 'Phra Buddhagharmisher Jambudi-panivattisukhodaya', signifying the return of Dharmeshwar Lord Buddha to Jambudweep, bearing happiness. In 1992, Venerable King Paramendra Ramadhipati Sri Sindra Mahavajralankaran paid an official visit to the Thai Bodh Gaya Buddhist Monastery.

The monastery has an attractive exterior and a distinct interior. The special feature of the temple is its golden statue, inaugurated on Buddha Purnima in 1967. This 3.6-meter tall statue was a gift from the Prime Minister of Thailand, Mahapasak Thanom Kitti Kyon. Crafted in Bangkok, the statue was transported to Patna via a special aircraft and then brought to Bodh Gaya in a ceremonial procession. After circumambulating the Mahabodhi Temple three times, the statue was installed amidst the chant of holy mantras.



Fo Guang Shan Temple

Coordinates : 24.69055, 84.98693

Fo Guang Shan Temple,Bodhgaya
佛光普照三千界
法水長流五大洲

Fo Guang Shan Monastery is located 1.2 kilometres southwest of Mahabodhi Temple. The monastery is affliated with the Fo Guang Shan, which is one of the largest Buddhist organizations in Taiwan. It is a centre of Buddhist education and symbolic of the rich cultural heritage of the country.

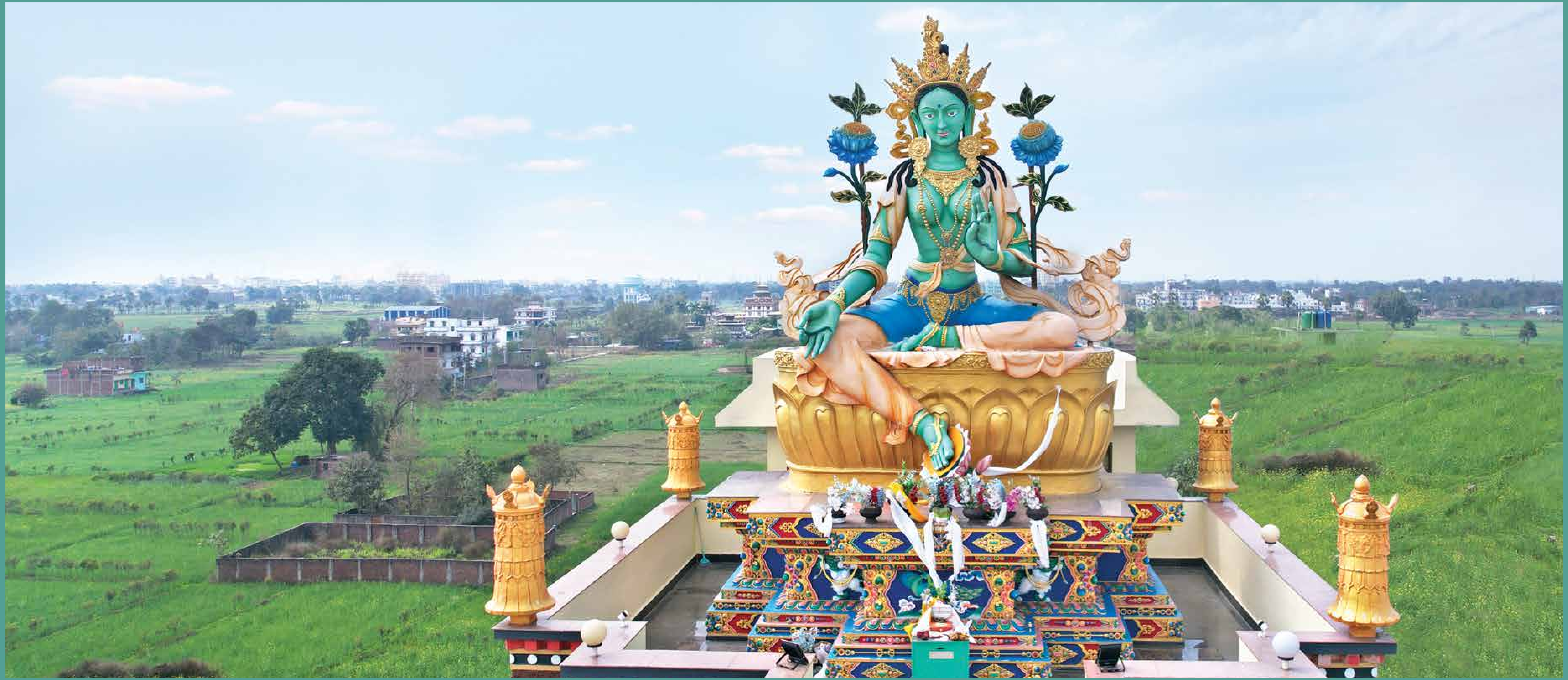
All India Bhikkhu Sangha

Coordinates : 24.69433, 84.98470

SPo by The Name
Late Smt
NIRMALA DEVI

21 Tara Devi Temple

Coordinates : 24.70626, 84.97843



Bodh Gaya in Bihar is an honoured destination for Buddhists worldwide and is often regarded as the centre of the Earth. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the complex is a sacred learning centre for all Buddhists. In 2016, His Eminence Gyarawa Rinpoche envisioned an institute for Buddhist devotees and practitioners to engage in the study of Buddhist meditation and practices. This vision culminated in the establishment of the Tara Devi Temple with the support of Druk Jetavana Charitable Trust. The temple is dedicated to Tara Devi and is renowned for its distinctive architectural design and the mandalas of Buddhist Tantric deities.

Tara Devi holds a significant place in the hearts of Buddhist Tantric practitioners worldwide and also as a revered Goddess in India under the teachings of Tara Tantra. The temple's mandala featuring Lord Chakrasamvara and the Sritro deities is crafted in accordance with Buddhist tantric art texts, thus making the Tara Devi temple a cherished centre for sacred Buddhist teachings and practices followed for centuries in Bodh Gaya.

The temple, consisting of three floors, features an exquisite idol of Lord Buddha on the first level. The subsequent two floors house idols representing the 21 incarnations of Tara Devi. While 20 of these are depicted in white, one is a prominent green-hued statue of Tara Devi that adorns the topmost floor.

According to Arya Dipankar Shrigyan and other great scholars, if any person worships, praises and establishes the Vitra (of Tara), then that person becomes free from the worldly illusions like eight fears and sixteen fears etc. If one worships, prays and studies the name and form of each of the 21 Taras, one is blessed with happiness and victory.

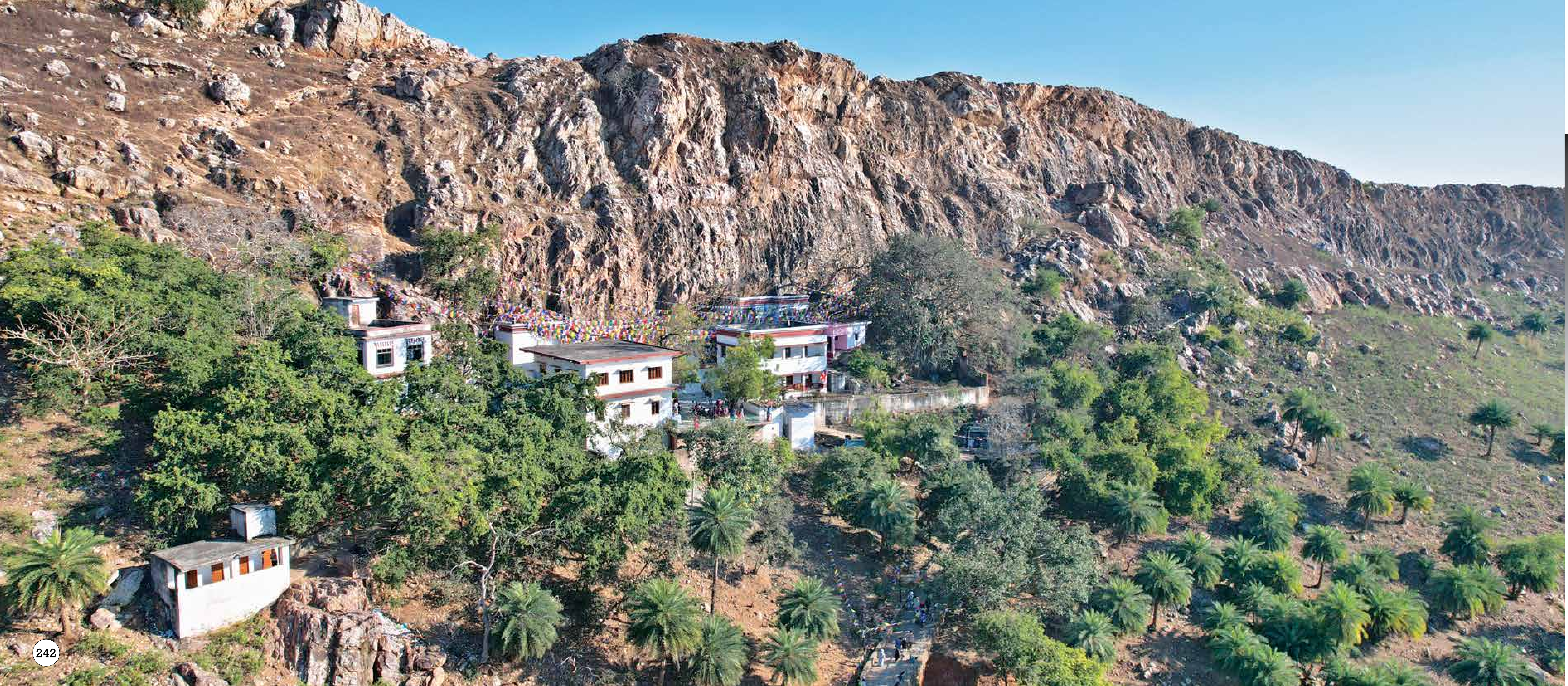
The names and characteristics of all the 21 incarnations are as follows –

(1) Arya Turevir Tara – prevents violence etc.
(2) Arya Shukla Kanta Tara – calms down planetary obstacles.
(3) Arya Kanakavarna Tara – provides longevity.

(4) Arya and Gatoshnish Tara – lessens effects of poison.
(5) Arya Hunkar Nadini Tara – subjugates
(6) Arya Trilokya Vijaya Tara – suppresses ghosts and purifies the form
(7) Arya Pramardini Tara – reverses the knowledge mantra of others
(8) Arya Marmardneshwari Tara – suppresses the enemy
(9) Arya Khadirvani Tara – protects from fear
(10) Arya Shok Vinodan Tara – suppresses death
(11) Arya Jagadwashi Tara – removes poverty
(12) Arya Mangala Lok Tara – brings good fortune
(13) Arya Paripachak Tara – lessens challenges
(14) Arya Bhrikuti Tara – removes obstacles
(15) Arya Mahashanti Tara – expiates sin
(16) Arya Raag Nishudan Tara – gives victory in arguments
(17) Arya Sukha Sadhna Tara – imprisons thieves
(18) Arya Vijay Tara – prevents from diseases related to snakes
(19) Arya Dukh Dahan Tara – calms bad dreams and liberates from imprisonment.
(20) Arya Siddhi Sambhav Tara – cures diseases
(21) Arya Parinispanna Tara – helps in completion of all kinds of tasks

Goddess Tara is revered and respected as a mother and holds a special position amongst all deities. Displaying various forms, her white and green appearances are the most honoured. Known as Dolma in Tibet, Maa Tara is considered as the goddess of mercy and bestows blessings upon all living beings for their prosperity. Notably, she is depicted with a third eye on her forehead and eyes on her hands and feet, symbolizing her vigilance over all living beings. The white form of Maa Tara is associated with 21 incarnations.

Goddess Tara in Green, symbolizes mercy and is worshipped to overcome difficulties, obstacles, and dangers. Her seated posture signifies readiness for immediate action, while she is adorned with jewels and has a golden aura.



Prayagbodhi caves, Dungeshwari Hills

Coordinates : 24.73766, 85.04960

Dungeshwari Hills also known as Mahakal or Prayagbodhi caves are situated 19 km north-east of Mahabodhi Temple, across the Niranjana River. These hills hold a historical significance as it is considered that Lord Buddha meditated at this place before arriving in Bodh Gaya, where he finally attained enlightenment. Prince Siddhartha spent six years in this region practising extreme austerities before awakening to the supreme truth. Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang has also documented these hills in his travelogue. This area is a part of the Uruvela forest and has several places associated with the penance of Prince Siddhartha. Dungeshwari Caves is one such site. The site can be reached through a mountainous track presently. However, there are plans to construct a ropeway leading to this cave, while a palanquin service is already available. At the summit, a golden statue of Lord Buddha is enshrined within a cave, attracting visitors. It also has a designated space for praying and meditation.

BUDDHIST DONATION
寺庙功德箱

Sujata Kuti

Coordinates : 24.69619, 85.00848

SUJATA TEMPLE
BAKROUR BODHGAYA
OPENING TIME 6:00 AM
CLOSING TIME 6:00 PM
MO : NO
9546572323

The villages, mountains and caves across the Niranjana River have all been an integral part of Prince Siddhartha's journey to becoming Buddha. Folk tales about Buddha's life abound here. Bakraur village, which was once known as Senanigrama is also situated here. A temple named Sujata Cottage (Kuti) is the main attraction here. This temple is dedicated to a girl named Sujata who offered rice pudding to Buddha just before he attained enlightenment.

Sujata holds a significant place in the history of Bodh Gaya and her existence is corroborated by the discoveries during excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India during 1873 to 1874 and 2001 to 2006. An important finding during the excavation was an inscription dating back to the 8th or the 9th century bearing the words 'Devpal Rajasya Sujata Griha', confirming Sujata as a historical figure and not an imaginary character. The term "Devpal" has been associated with the king of the Pala dynasty of the 9th century. In honor of Sujata, the local villagers constructed a temple known as Sujata Kuti (cottage). The temple has a statue depicting Sujata offering rice pudding to Prince Siddhartha.

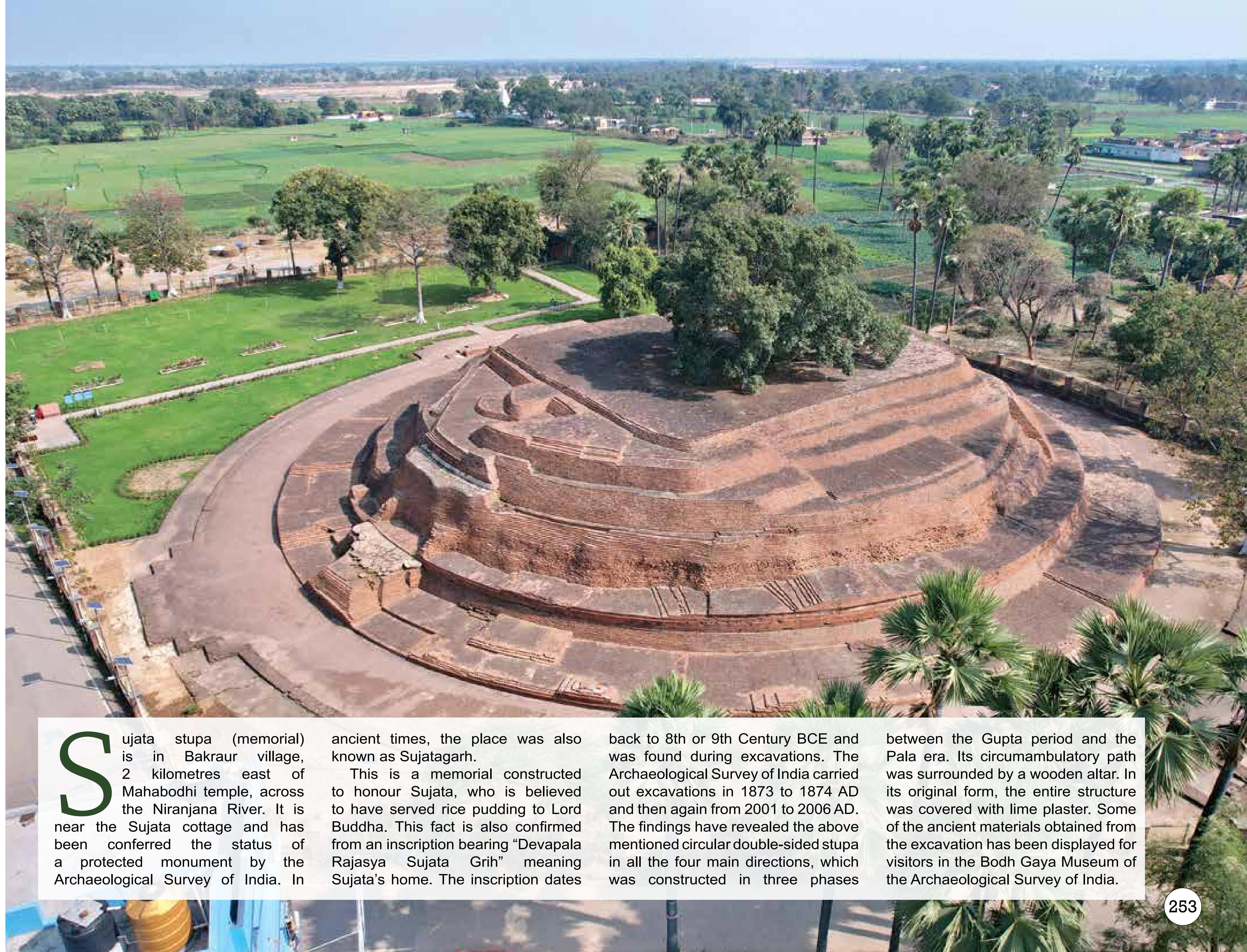
According to local legend, Prince Siddhartha, on his spiritual quest was wandering in the forests of Uruvela. He reached a point of extreme frailty due to his rigorous practices. It was in the Senani village (Senanigrama) that Sujata, daughter of the village head, played a crucial role. Sujata was advised by a priest that feeding rice pudding made from cow's milk to God Shakya would bless her with children. Sujata's maid mistook Prince Siddhartha meditating under a Banyan tree as the deity. Prompted by her attendant, Sujata prepared and offered rice pudding to the prince, revitalizing him with the nourishment. Subsequently, Prince Siddhartha bathed in the Niranjana River and proceeded to the Mahabodhi tree where he achieved enlightenment. Prince Siddhartha became the revered Mahatma Buddha. Buddhist pilgrims frequent this site to experience the event that transformed the life of Buddha as well as the entire humankind.

JATA TEMPLE
is the ancient
e, Where Sujata
illage Senani
OUR) had offered
rice to Siddhartha
Under Banyan tree

DONATION BOX

Sujata Stupa

Coordinates : 24.69799, 85.00410

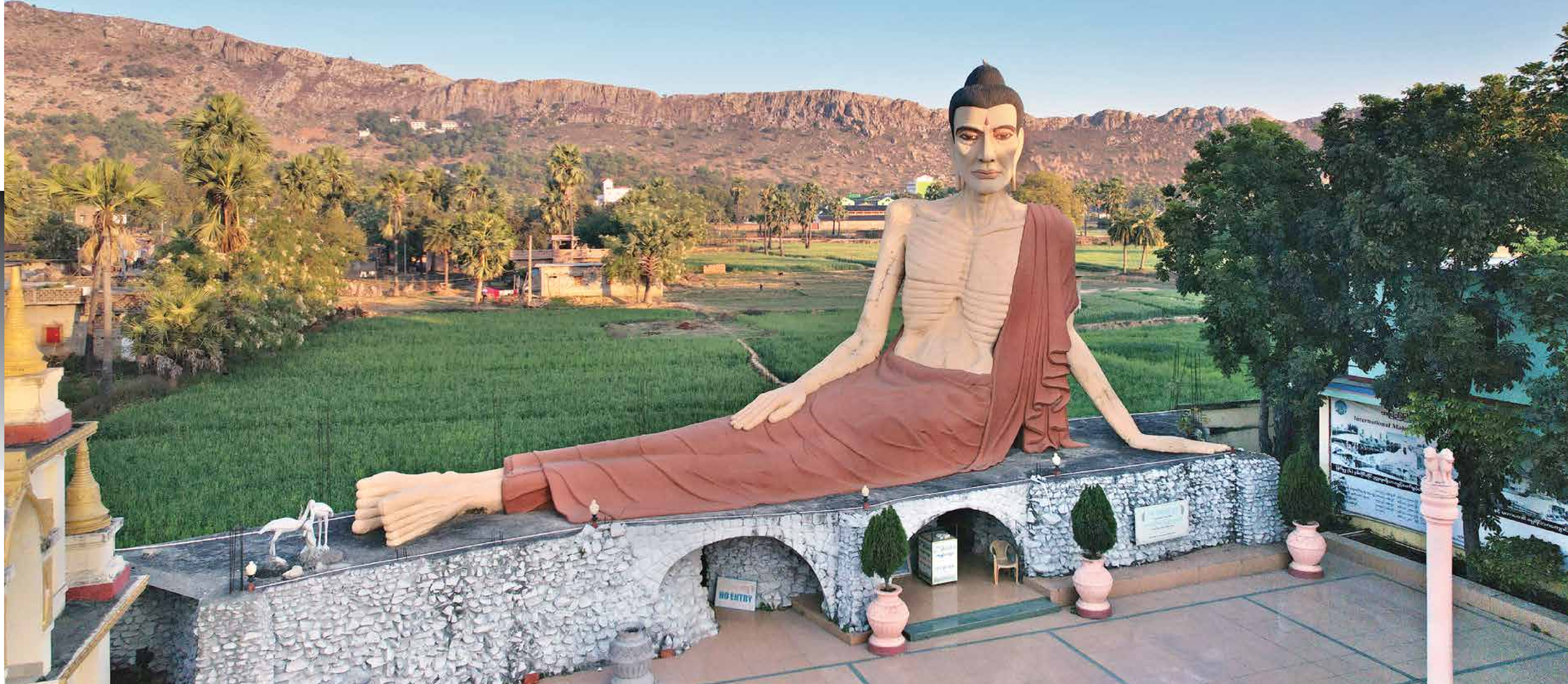


Sujata stupa (memorial) is in Bakraur village, 2 kilometres east of Mahabodhi temple, across the Niranjana River. It is near the Sujata cottage and has been conferred the status of a protected monument by the Archaeological Survey of India. In ancient times, the place was also known as Sujatagarh.

This is a memorial constructed to honour Sujata, who is believed to have served rice pudding to Lord Buddha. This fact is also confirmed from an inscription bearing "Devapala Rajasya Sujata Grih" meaning Sujata's home. The inscription dates back to 8th or 9th Century BCE and was found during excavations. The Archaeological Survey of India carried out excavations in 1873 to 1874 AD and then again from 2001 to 2006 AD. The findings have revealed the above mentioned circular double-sided stupa in all the four main directions, which was constructed in three phases between the Gupta period and the Pala era. Its circumambulatory path was surrounded by a wooden altar. In its original form, the entire structure was covered with lime plaster. Some of the ancient materials obtained from the excavation has been displayed for visitors in the Bodh Gaya Museum of the Archaeological Survey of India.

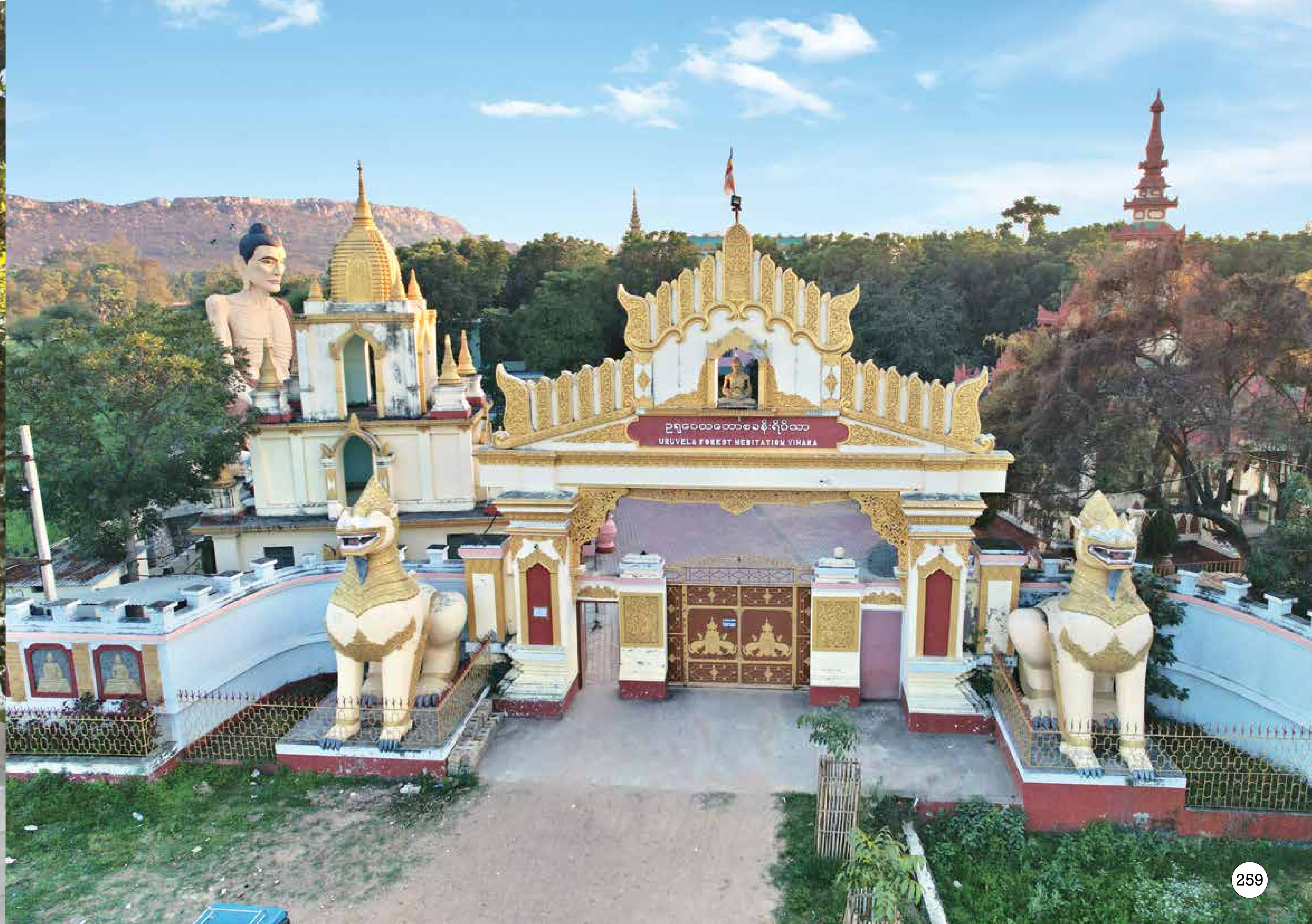
Uruvela Forest Meditation Centre

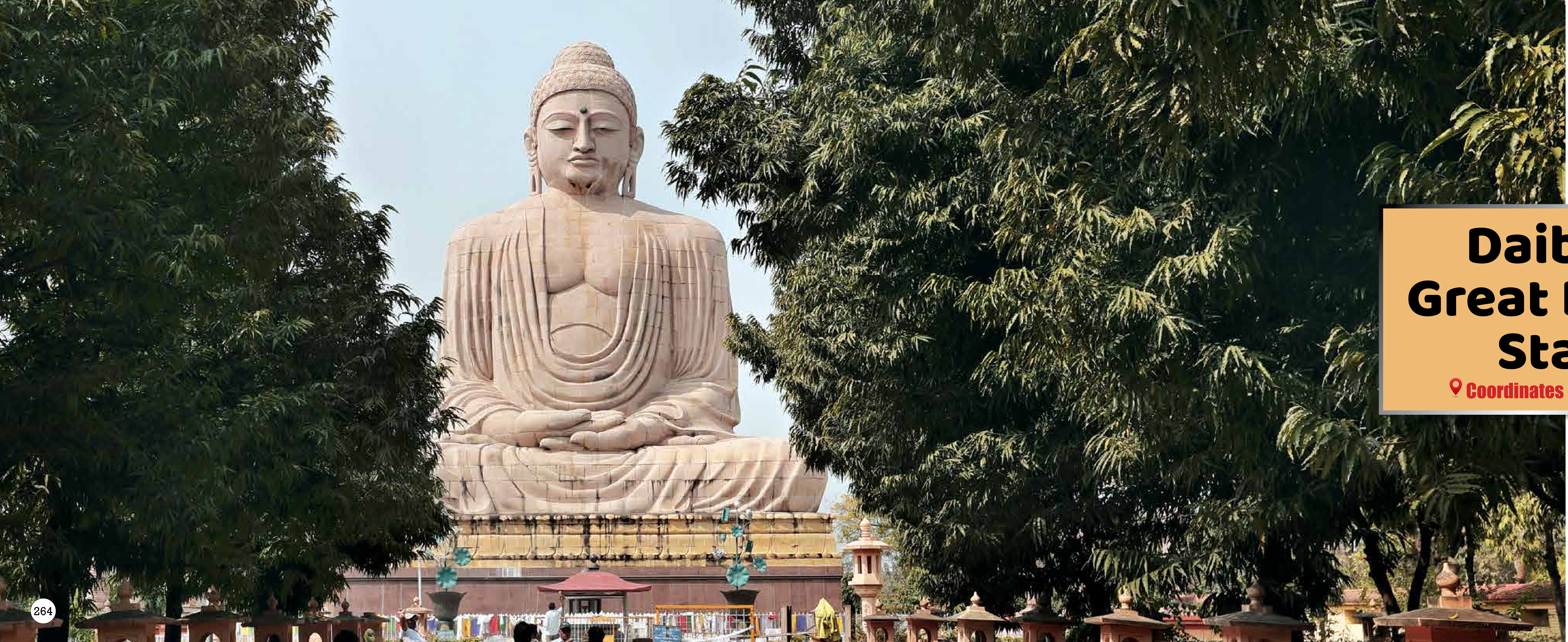
Coordinates : 24.73898, 85.03924



Uruvela Forest Meditation Centre is situated in the lap of Dungeshwari hills in Larpur village, across the Niranjana river and lies 19 kilometres north-east of the Mahabodhi Temple. The foundation stone of the monastery was laid in the year 2012 and was completed in the year 2016. Monk Ven Chandramuni Bhanteji was quite instrumental in the construction of this centre.

Meditation camps are organized free of cost throughout the year with the exception of a few months during summer at this tranquil monastery. It offers accommodation for both monks and nuns, and is open for visitors as well. The temple's courtyard showcases several sculptures depicting Lord Buddha's practice of austerities before attaining enlightenment. The largest statue portrays him in a semi-reclined position during the rigorous penance when he abstained from food and water and became physically weak. The Mighty Lions, symbol of Myanmar are placed at the monastery's entry gate. Inside the monastery, Buddha is depicted meditating alongside his five companions.





Daibutsu Great Buddha Statue

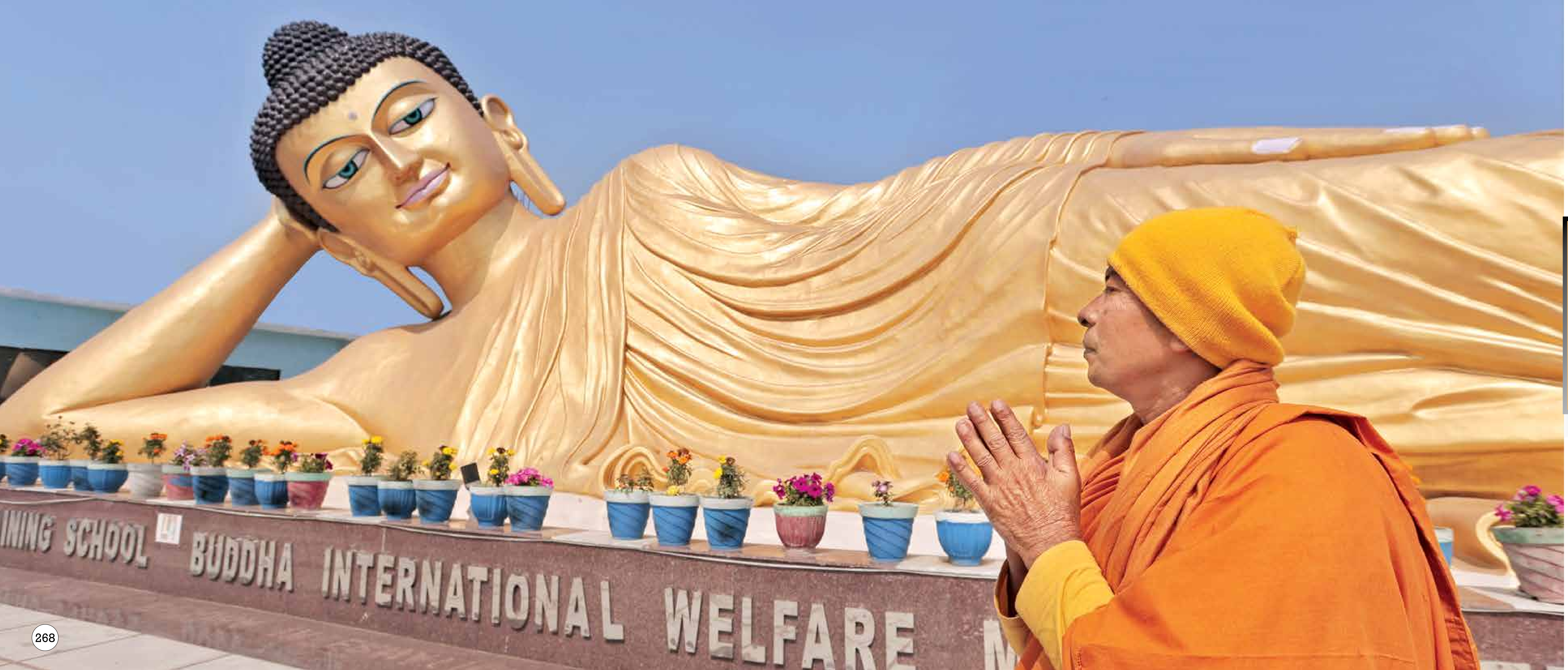
Coordinates : 24.69628, 84.98742

Upāli
優波離
Anuruddha
阿那律
Subhūti
須菩提
Mahākassapa
大迦葉
Mahāmoggallāna
大目犍連

The Daibutsu is the second biggest attraction of Bodh Gaya after the Mahabodhi Temple. Daibutsu means 'huge Buddha statue' in Japanese. This huge Buddha statue is 80 feet in height and was built by the Dai Jo Kyo Buddhist Institute located in Nagoya, Japan.

This great statue serves as a symbol of global peace and joy, and is a fitting tribute to Buddha and his teachings. Seated in a meditative posture atop a lotus, the statue is crafted from pink stones of Chunar, a kind of sandstone found in the Chunar region of Uttar Pradesh. The lotus and the base are made of yellow Chunar stones and red granite stones respectively. The blueprint for this grand Buddha statue was conceived by the renowned sculptor from South India, Shri Ganapati Satpathy, while the model was crafted by Shri Rishikesh Das Gupta of Kolkata. Thakur and Sons of Chunar, Uttar Pradesh were given the responsibility to construct the statue.

The unveiling ceremony of the statue was held on November 18, 1989 and was graced by the revered Dalai Lama. Additionally, the statues depicting the ten primary disciples of Tathagata Buddha were unveiled by the Governor of Bihar, Dr. A.R. Kidwai, on February 20, 1996. The monumental statue was completed in a span of four years. The Buddha statue is 64 feet in height, the lotus design on which the statue is placed has a height of 6 feet while the base has a height of 10 feet – which add to the grandeur of the Bodh Gaya.


INING SCHOOL
BUDDHA INTERNATIONAL WELFARE M

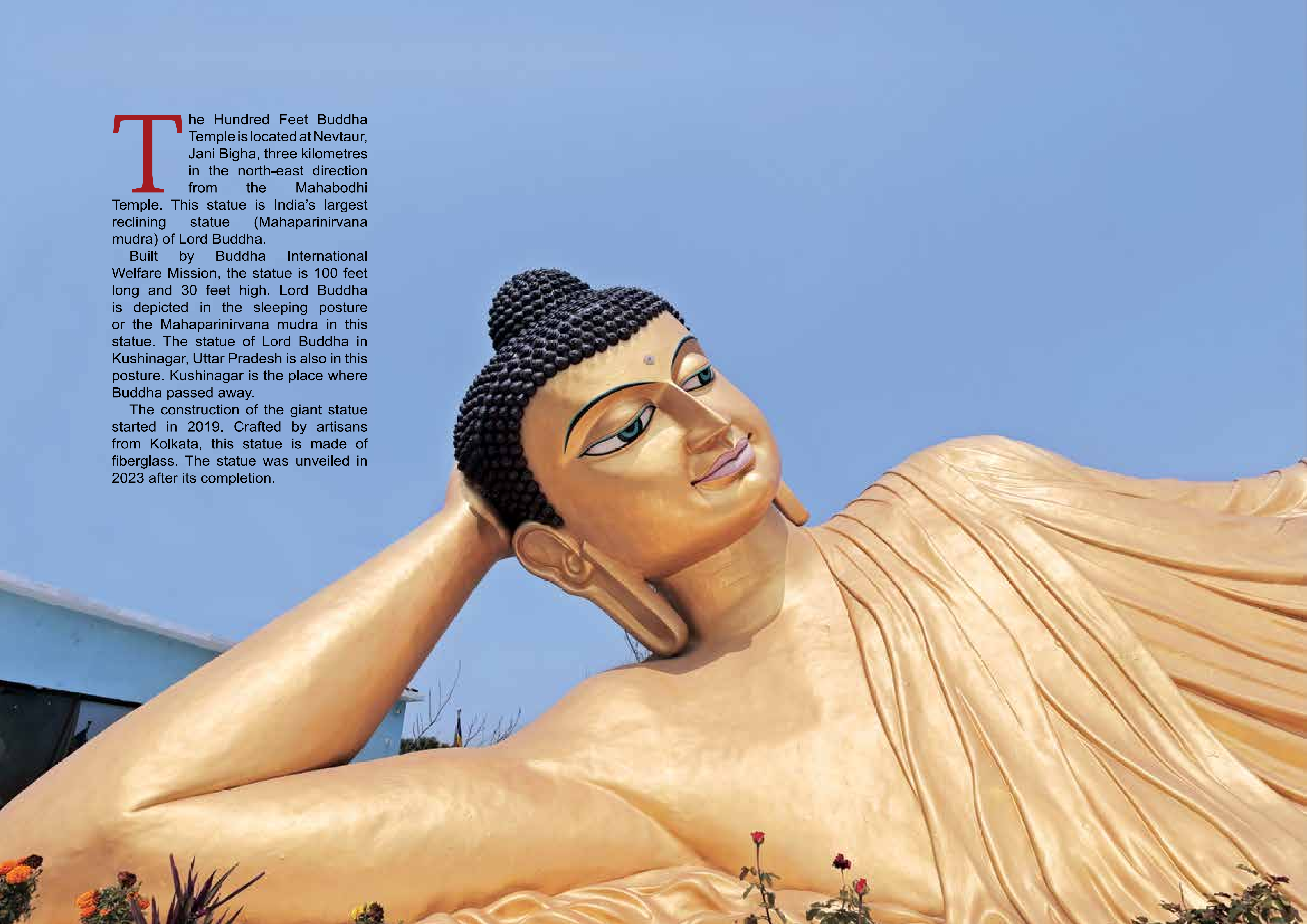
100 Feet Buddha

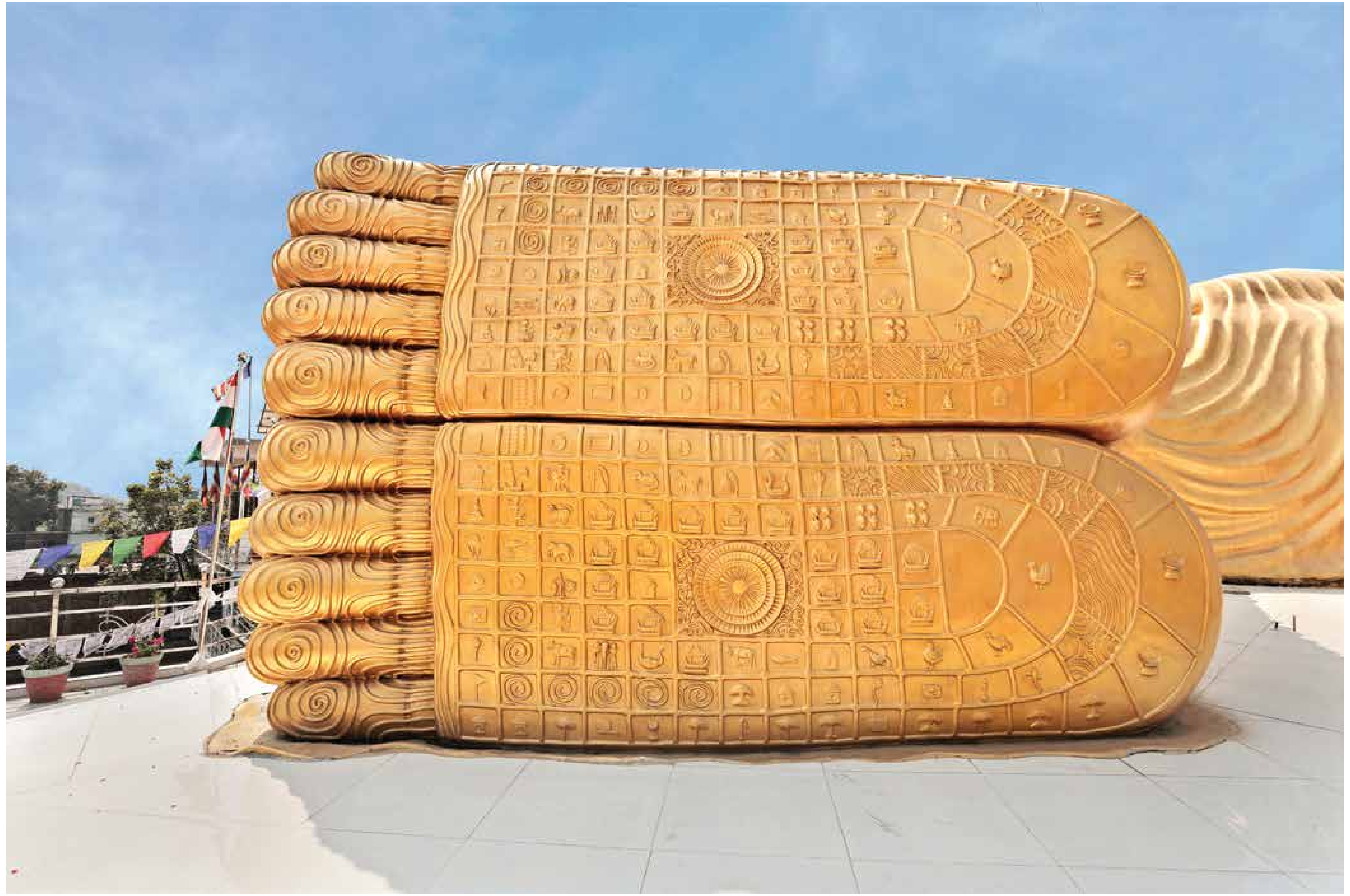
Coordinates : 24.71811, 84.99893

The Hundred Feet Buddha Temple is located at Nevtaur, Jani Bigha, three kilometres in the north-east direction from the Mahabodhi Temple. This statue is India's largest reclining statue (Mahaparinirvana mudra) of Lord Buddha.

Built by Buddha International Welfare Mission, the statue is 100 feet long and 30 feet high. Lord Buddha is depicted in the sleeping posture or the Mahaparinirvana mudra in this statue. The statue of Lord Buddha in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh is also in this posture. Kushinagar is the place where Buddha passed away.

The construction of the giant statue started in 2019. Crafted by artisans from Kolkata, this statue is made of fiberglass. The statue was unveiled in 2023 after its completion.





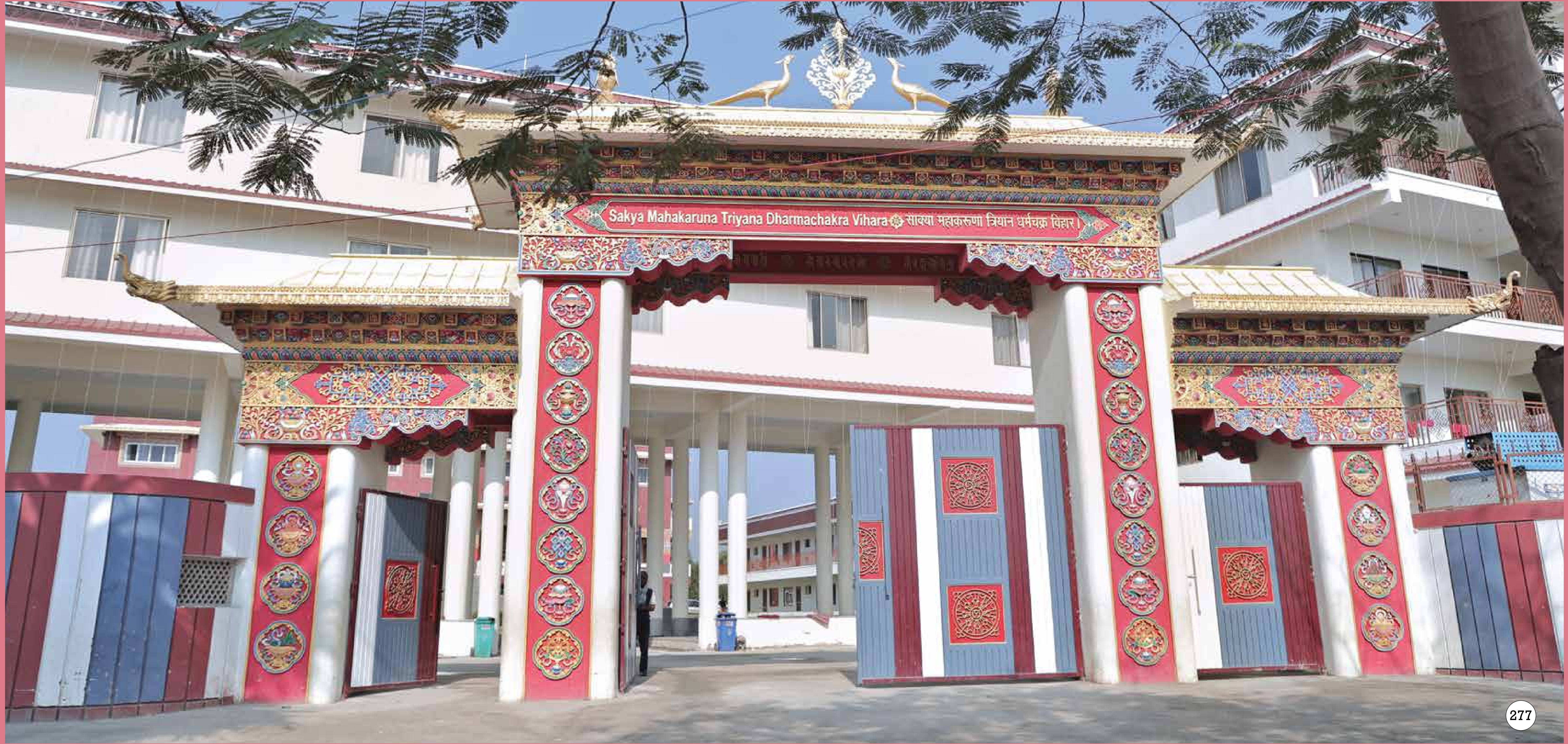
Karsha Monastery

Coordinates : 24.69341, 85.01311

Karsha Buddhist Vihar is located in Bakraur village, 2 km east of Mahabodhi Temple, across the Niranjana River. This is an ancient Buddhist monastery related to the Zanskar region of Ladakh. It serves as a place of study for the Buddhist nuns. Modest in size, this monastery presents a captivating sight.

Sakya Tibetan Monastery

Coordinates : 24.67939, 84.97454


Sakya Mahakaruna Triyana Dharmachakra Vihara
साक्या महाकरुणा त्रियान धर्मचक्र विहार।

Sakya monastery also known as Sakya Mahakaruna Triyana Dharmachakra Vihar, is situated 3.3 kilometres northwest of the Mahabodhi Temple. Established in 2014 by the Dolma Phodrang Foundation, this monastery is part of the Sakya tradition of Tibet, which was established in 1073 AD.

The Sakya School, a prominent Vajrayana Buddhist tradition in Tibet, was established by Khon Konchog Gyalpo, a disciple of the renowned translator Drogmi, who played a pivotal role in translating Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit to Tibetan.

The first monastery of the tradition was constructed in a place called Sakya. Subsequently, the teachings of Buddhism have been consistently passed on to generations through the Khon family. Currently, His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin occupies the highest seat and is carrying forward the sacred tradition. The Khon family remains steadfast in their efforts to spread the Dharma for the well-being of all sentient beings. The inspiration drawn from the tireless propagation of Buddhism led to the establishment of this monastery.

Archaeological Museum

Coordinates : 24.69497, 84.98700

भारतीय पुरातत्त्व सर्वेक्षण
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
पुरातत्त्व संग्रहालय बोधगया
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM BODHGAYA
MUSEUM
संग्रहालय

The Archaeological Survey of India has set up an archaeological museum at Bodh Gaya which was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 27 December 1956. The main objective of the museum is to preserve and protect the rich cultural legacy of the region. The museum exhibits more than 300 invaluable artefacts in three main galleries, porticos and corridors, while about 1350 precious pieces are safely preserved in the reserve collection. The fragments of the original stone railing that enclosed the Mahabodhi tree which was carved in sandstone and granite are the most notable collections of this museum.

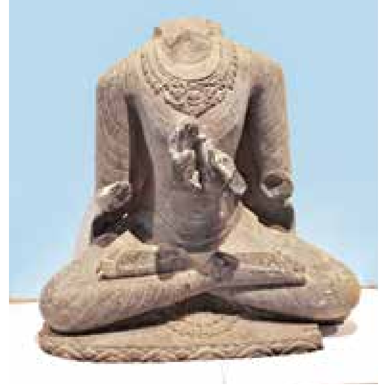
Ancient sculptures of Buddha's disciples like Maitreya, Manjushri, Avalokiteshwara, Tara, Jambhala etc. are part of the priceless collection of this museum. It also displays many statues related to Hinduism. Vijan Sthanaka statues of the incarnations of Vishnu, Vishnu, Ganesha, Uma and Mahesh, Ramdev Sandhamaka etc are the most significant.

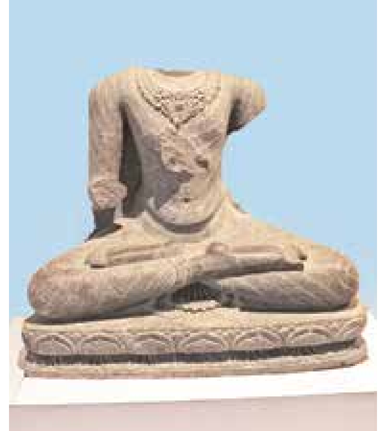
A magnificent statue of Buddha in stone in the Abhayamundra greets the visitor at first sight. The slab behind the statue also has intricate carvings that are displayed on a pedestal in the corridor.

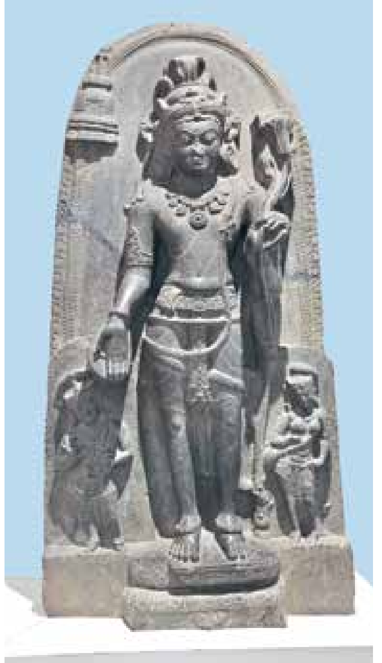
The original sandstone railing of the Mahabodhi temple, which is the main attraction is displayed in a large hall of the museum and is considered to be of the Shunga period of 2nd century BCE. The granite railing dates back to the 6th to 7th century BCE. Jataka tales that detail about Buddha's life are prominently depicted on the pillars. Yaksha-Yakshi figures, zodiac signs, historical and folk tales as well as flora and fauna on these pillars display the rich historical craftsmanship. Some of the pillars bear the names of people who donated these. An ancient Sun statue inscribed on a sandstone pillar in the southwest corner is noted as one of the oldest depictions of the Sun in India. Moreover, statues of various expressions and postures of Buddha and other images associated with Buddhism of the Pala era are also displayed in this gallery.

Gallery-1 has a remarkable collection of Buddhist statues including Buddha in various postures like Bhumisparshamundra Abhayamundra, Dharma Chakra Pravartan, and Dhyan Mudra, along with the figures of Avalokiteshwara, Jambhal, Tara, Maitreya, and Manjushri belonging to the Pala period.

Excavation findings and cultural artefacts from Sujatagarh mound near Bakraur village, a kilometer away from the Mahabodhi Temple, add to the museum's cultural wealth. The excavation led by the Archaeological Survey of India unveiled a brick stupa honouring Sujata, known for offering rice pudding to Lord Buddha before his enlightenment. This museum is maintained by the Patna Division of the Archaeological Survey of India and is a treasure trove of Bodh Gaya's ancient heritage.

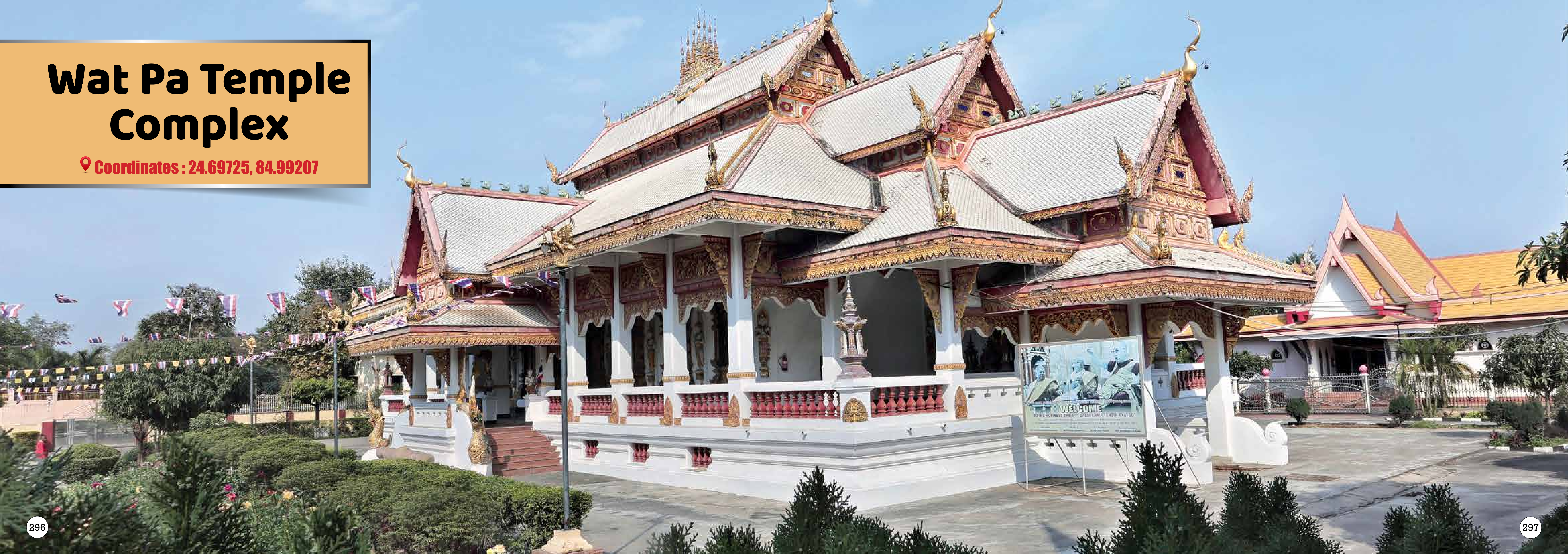




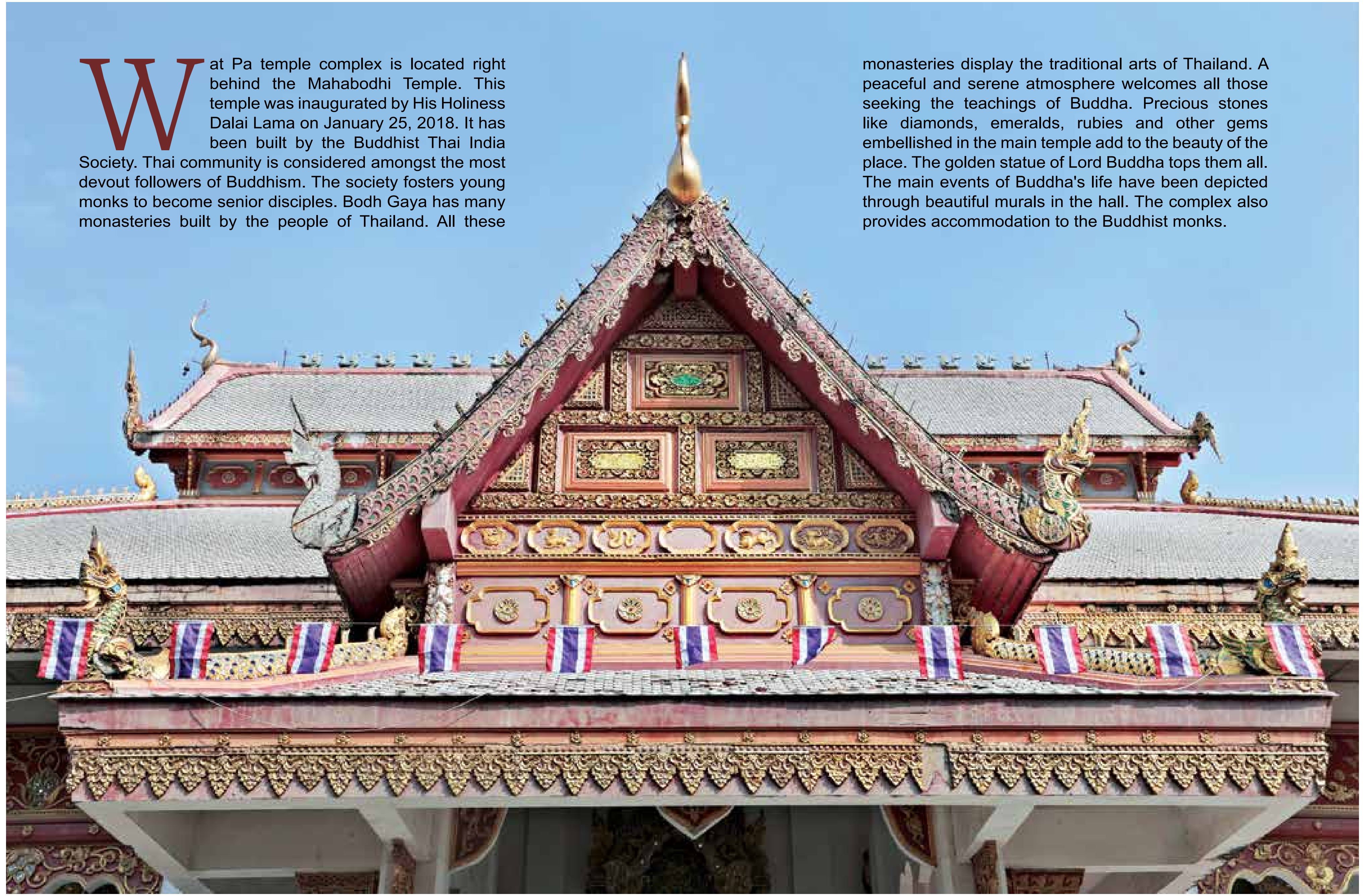


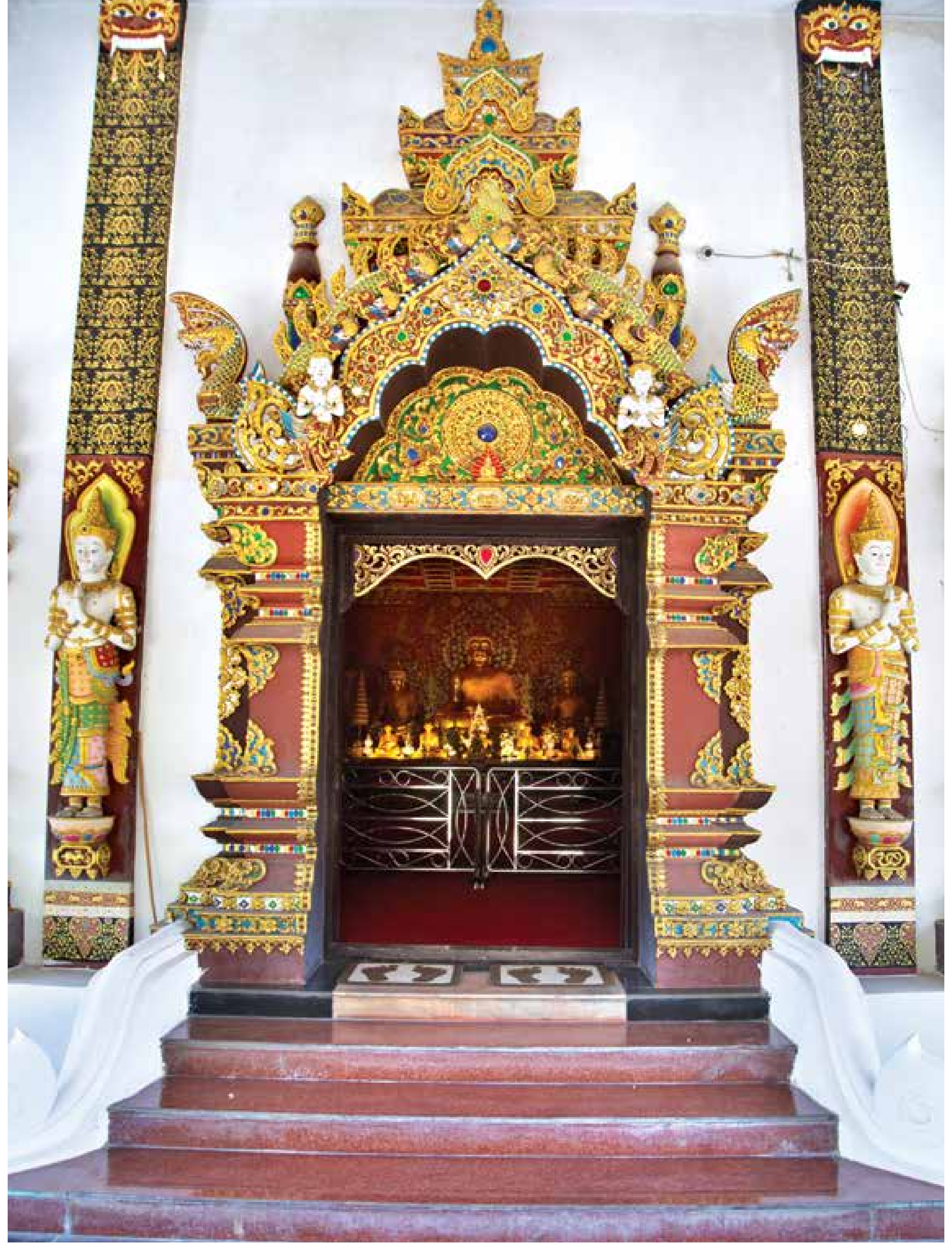
Wat Pa Temple Complex

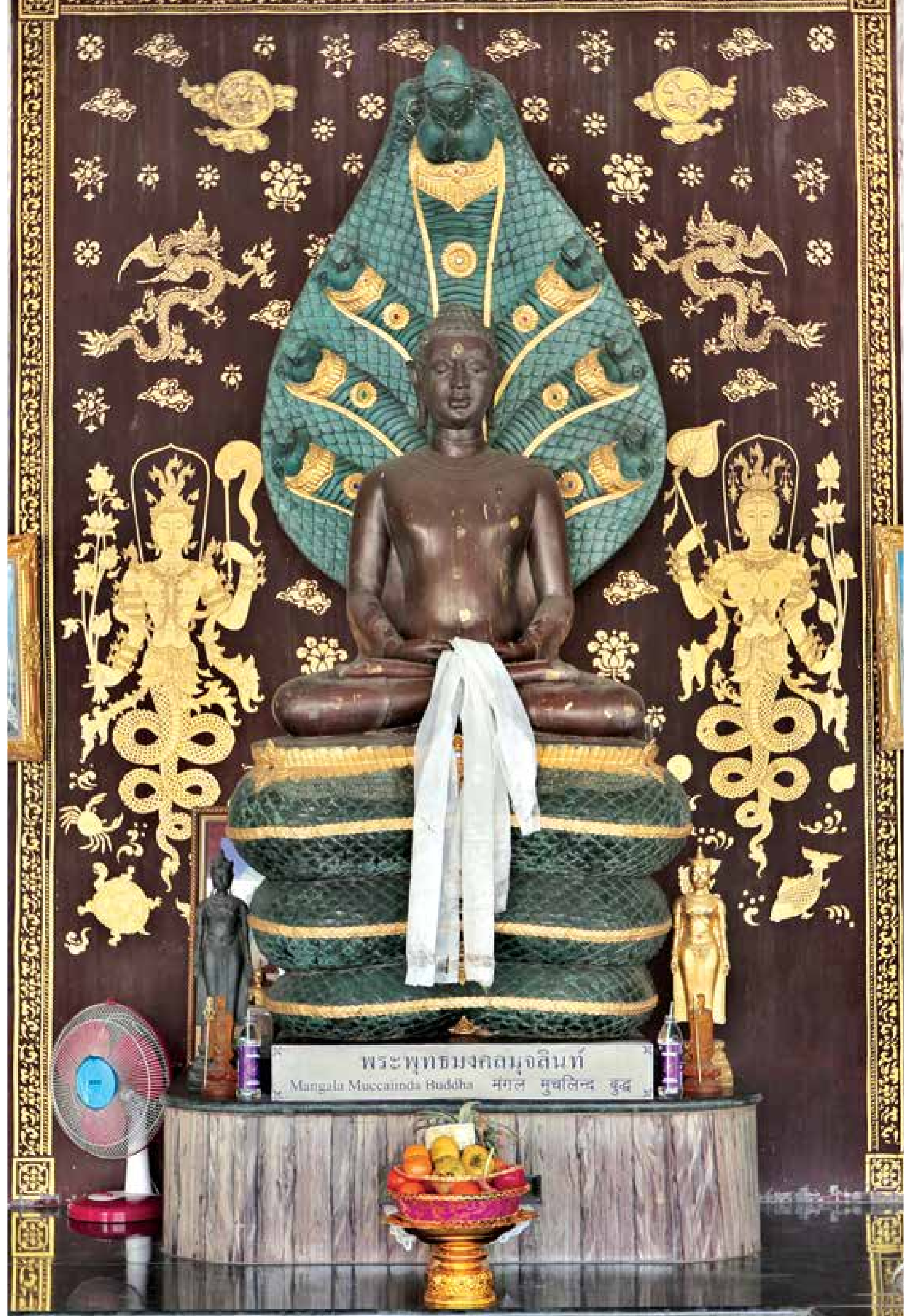
Coordinates : 24.69725, 84.99207



Wat Pa temple complex is located right behind the Mahabodhi Temple. This temple was inaugurated by His Holiness Dalai Lama on January 25, 2018. It has been built by the Buddhist Thai India Society. Thai community is considered amongst the most devout followers of Buddhism. The society fosters young monks to become senior disciples. Bodh Gaya has many monasteries built by the people of Thailand. All these monasteries display the traditional arts of Thailand. A peaceful and serene atmosphere welcomes all those seeking the teachings of Buddha. Precious stones like diamonds, emeralds, rubies and other gems embellished in the main temple add to the beauty of the place. The golden statue of Lord Buddha tops them all. The main events of Buddha's life have been depicted through beautiful murals in the hall. The complex also provides accommodation to the Buddhist monks.






พระพุทธมงคลมุจลินท์
Mangala Muccalinda Buddha
मंगल मुचलिन्द बुद्ध

DONATION BOX

What to write about such a book! I would simply say that it is a collector's Item. The rare photographs of Vajrasana and various other monuments that make it valuable even for scholars.

KK Muhammad
Padma Awardee Archaeologist
Former Regional Director
(North), Archaeological Survey
of India

MURTY
TRUST
Igniting Ideas of India

scan, read & share

About Dr Kaynat Kazi

Dr. Kaynat Kazi is the first female sole traveller in India, who has a collection of one lakh memories in the form of photographs. Over the five years of her travels, she has covered a distance of about Three lakh kilometres in India and abroad. Kaynat is a photographer, travel writer and blogger but travelling is the closest to her heart that is why she prefers to be introduced as a solo female traveller. Travelling is her passion and photography is her hobby. Her love for literature and research has also strengthened her passion.

Kaynat has received many awards and accolades for her travel writings. She has been awarded the Paryatan Ratna Samman, the ABP News Best Hindi Blogger Award and many more. Kaynat launched the first Hindi travel photography blog named Rahagiri (rahagiri.com) and continues to successfully manage it till today. Many of her photo exhibitions have been held. Kaynat has worked in many media institutions after completing a degree in journalism and MBA. However, she decided to pursue her love for photography and writing and gave up her career in media. Kaynat has a PhD in Hindi literature and published 11 books so far.

Kaynat has been writing articles on tourism and culture in the country's well-known Hindi newspapers for a long time. Currently, she is heading the Bougainvillea Art Foundation located in Greater Noida, under which she is engaged in the preservation and promotion of the diverse culture of India.